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ARABELLA STUART.

A ROMANCE

FROM ENGLISH HISTORY.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

“DARNLEY,” “DE L’ORME,” “THE FALSE HEIR,” ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ARABELLA STUART.

CHAPTER I.

WEEKS, months, and years passed away like a tale that is told ; and on their passing we shall not pause, dear reader, for to say truth we should have little to relate, which in a work such as this would be pleasing to your ear. What satisfaction could you derive from pictures of a court full of venality and corruption ? — What satisfaction would it be either to the writer or the reader to look into the pruriences of the most disgusting monarch that ever sat upon the English throne ?

We will not therefore attempt to paint him to you, either in his villanous efforts to crush the liberties of his people, and to establish the

tyranny of prerogative upon the ruins of the English constitution ; or, in his pitiful pedantry, erecting himself into an Ecclesiastical judge, and setting himself up as the Pope of Great Britain. We will not represent him in his unjust and illiberal prodigality, stripping the crown of its wealth, robbing his subjects of their property, and despoiling the best servants of the State of their just reward, to bestow with a lavish and a thoughtless hand the plunder of the people upon the unworthy heads of base and ill-deserving favourites. We will not display him in his cold, fanatical cruelties, more horrible than the wildest excesses of passionate tyranny ; we will not show him dangling with his upstart minions, in those sickening scenes which have caused not unreasonable suspicions of the most horrible crimes.

We will leave the course of James I. to the page of history, where it remains a foul blot, which not all the blood and horrors of the great rebellion—of which it was the origin and cause—have been able to efface. If ever the sins of the fathers were, according to the unshakeable decree of the Almighty, visited upon the chil-

dren, such was most strikingly the case in the destiny of the unhappy race which sprang from his loins.

We must, however, touch upon some points affecting the fate of several of those whom we have brought upon the scene ; and first we must conclude the sad tale of the conspirators. We shall do so, however, as briefly as possible ; for this too is a matter of mere history, and only one or two of those personages lived to take part in the succeeding events.

As the plague still raged in London, the judges met at Maidenhead to inquire into the case against the prisoners, and examinations were entered into of a very irregular character, which were succeeded by a Special Commission, the chief end and object of which seemed to be, to set every principle of law and justice at defiance, to trample out the last sparks of liberty and security, and to show the British people that they were quite at the mercy of a vain and vicious king.

At the head of this Special Commission were Cecil and the Earl of Suffolk, with two chief

justices ; but two other judges sat in the court. The trials took place at Winchester, and George Brooke, Sir Griffin Markham, with several of the inferior conspirators, were first put to the bar. They were all found guilty, principally upon their own confessions, which were probably made in the hope of obtaining pardon ; and upon all, the severe sentence of high treason was pronounced. The two priests, Watson and Clarke, were also condemned ; and then Cobham, Grey, and Raleigh were severally brought to trial.

The demeanour of these three gentlemen in court excited not a little attention at the time, the deportment of each being very different from that of the others, and each marked with strong characteristic traits. Lord Cobham displayed nothing but weakness, imbecility, and fear ; he trembled violently during the reading of the indictment, endeavoured to excuse himself by casting the blame upon his friends, made a confession more ample, it is generally supposed, than even truth warranted, and ended by begging hard for life, when sentence of death was pronounced upon him.

A very different scene was displayed at the trial of Lord Grey de Wilton. He defended himself with courage, vigour, and eloquence, without the slightest sign of fear or anxiety; showed himself learned in the law of the land, and by his gallant bearing and skilful reasoning both won the favour, and shook the opinion, of many of his judges. Nevertheless, the confessions of George Brooke and Sir Griffin Markham, in which his name was mentioned, were received as conclusive evidence against him, and he likewise was pronounced guilty of high treason. When asked if he had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon him, he replied at first, "Nothing!" but then added "*Non eadem omnibus decora*. The House of the Wiltons have spent many lives in their Princes' service, and Grey cannot beg his."

Raleigh was the next to undergo the torture of a public trial, and against him there was arrayed the envy of inferior minds, the hatred of a king, the malice of private enemies, the prepossession of his judges, and all the virulence of legal insolence. The conduct of the attorney-

general Sir Edward Coke stamped him for posterity as one of the greatest villains, as well as one of the greatest lawyers, that ever lived; and his speech against the illustrious prisoner, offers a model, too frequently imitated in France, of all that the counsel for the prosecution should not say.

Raleigh displayed upon this terrible occasion all those powers of mind which distinguished him through life; and he also showed much temper and moderation in reply to the virulent abuse of Coke. The evidence upon which he was condemned—namely, a vague and unsatisfactory confession of Lord Cobham, unsigned, taken down from word of mouth, and recanted in the most solemn manner by a letter to Raleigh himself, and the testimony of a man named Dyer, who swore, that a stranger in Lisbon had said to him that the king would never be crowned, for Don Raleigh and Don Cobham would first cut his throat—would of course never be even heard in a court of justice, in the present day; and yet this was all that could be brought against him. But it was found sufficient in the

minds of the judges; and, although Raleigh demanded that Lord Cobham should be confronted with him, and urged that no man could be condemned upon the written testimony of only one witness, he was found guilty of high treason, and condemned to death. All that the prisoner required, after the verdict was given, was, that the king should be requested that his death might be an honourable and not an ignominious one. He hinted, however, a desire that his execution should be delayed till after Cobham's, probably in the hope that on the scaffold itself his former friend would do him justice, and declare his innocence with his dying breath.

After the trials, the Court and the country were all eager to know, what would be the conduct of the king, with whom alone the fate of the prisoners now remained; but James, following the usual principles of his kingcraft, kept his determinations to his own bosom, suffering not even his most favourite counsellors to know whether he would show lenity or severity. The crimes proved against George Brooke, and his general bad reputation, decided his fate, and he suffered

the full penalties of high treason in the month of November 1603. He died in the same bold and careless manner in which he had lived, apparently without either fear or regret; and the whole country seems to have approved of the firmness of the king in carrying his sentence into execution.

Different feelings however were entertained in regard to the two priests, Watson and Clarke, who suffered nearly at the same time. Neither of them showed the slightest want of courage, and Clarke boldly proclaimed on the scaffold, that he was a martyr to his religious faith. The Roman Catholics of course exalted their virtues and their devotion, and cried out against the severity with which they were treated by a monarch who had flattered the Papists with false hopes of toleration.

These three executions, however, created great alarm amongst the friends of the other prisoners; and various efforts were made to avert their fate by petition and solicitation. Still James remained silent and unmoved, the day appointed for the punishment of Cobham, Grey, and Mark-

ham, approached rapidly, and at length the death warrant was sent down to Winchester, and another was signed for the execution of Raleigh on the Monday following, three days after the period appointed for the fate of his fellow prisoners. Markham received some reason to hope, from private friends at the Court, that his life would be spared, but the two peers and Raleigh were directed to prepare themselves for certain death. The Bishop of Chichester and the Bishop of Winchester remained constantly with Lord Cobham and Sir Walter Raleigh, having been instructed by the king not only to give them religious consolation, but to induce them to make a full confession, with a view, it would appear, of reconciling the discrepancy of their statements.

If this was the monarch's object, however, no success was obtained; for while the weak and imbecile Lord Cobham once more varied in his statements, and reasserted all that he had previously laid to the charge of Raleigh, the knight firmly maintained his innocence, and varied not in the least from his former account.

At length, on the Friday appointed for the

execution, Markham was brought out of the castle, at ten o'clock in the morning, to the scaffold erected on the green. Finding all the preparations for the work of death ready, he complained bitterly of having been deluded with false hopes, admitted that he had listened but little to the exhortations of the priests, having been always assured that he would receive a pardon, and added that he was in no degree prepared to die.

Nevertheless, he displayed no want of courage, but calmly took leave of some of his friends who stood near the scaffold; but one of them having given him a handkerchief to cover his eyes, he threw it indignantly from him, saying that he could look death in the face without blushing. He then crossed himself, knelt, and prayed; after which he stripped off his doublet, and turned back the collar of his shirt, that his neck might receive the blow of the axe unimpeded. Whilst he was performing this last sad ceremony, a Scotch gentleman, of the name of John Gibb, Groom of the Bedchamber to the King, approached the scaffold from the side of the

castle, and called the Sheriff down to speak with him. Their conversation seemed long to the spectators, and probably not less so to the unfortunate Markham, who remained with his neck and shoulders bare, waiting for the order to lay his head upon the block. At length Sir Benjamin Tichborne, the sheriff, returned, and addressing the prisoner said, "Sir, since you tell me that you are so ill-prepared for death, having been led by false hopes that your life would be spared, I take upon me, after consultation with a gentleman attached to the King, to grant you two hours' respite, that you may reconcile yourself, if possible, to God before you die.—Follow me."

Hastily covering his throat, and resuming his garments, with his whole brain whirling and his heart full of doubt and uncertainty, Markham followed the Sheriff from the scaffold, and was conducted to the wide old stone chamber known in those days as Prince Arthur's Hall, where, the door being locked, he was left to meditate in solitude, without even the presence of a priest to afford him consolation, or encourage him to hope.

In the meanwhile Lord Grey de Wilton was led to the scaffold, accompanied by a Puritan minister of the name of Field, and a large troop of noble friends. His countenance was gay and smiling, his whole demeanour easy and unaffected; and after Field had prayed for some time, the young Lord addressed the people in an eloquent speech, full of deep religious feeling, and confidence in the mercy of God. He looked, says one of the authors of that day, more like a bridegroom than a condemned criminal.

In the midst of his speech, however, he was interrupted by the Sheriff, who informed him that he had the King's command to stay the order of the execution, and to behead Lord Cobham first. With much surprise, and with no expression of satisfaction, Lord Grey, whose mind was perfectly made up to his fate, suffered himself to be led back to the castle, where he also was locked up in Prince Arthur's Hall, to converse with Sir Griffin Markham upon their strange situation.

Lord Cobham was next brought upon the scene, and he also went through the same cere-

mony of prayer and preparation for the block. He showed none of that timidity and want of resolution, now that his fate was decided, which he had displayed while it seemed doubtful, but maintained that what he had said of Sir Walter Raleigh was true, though, as some writers have justly observed, no one could tell what he did really wish to impute and what he did not, as, amongst his various confessions and retractions, there was no one part that did not contradict another.

As he was about to kneel down to receive the stroke of the axe, the Sheriff stopped him, saying, that he had orders to confront him, even at that last hour, with some of the other conspirators; and a message having been sent into the castle, Lord Grey and Sir Griffin Markham were brought back to the scaffold, where Sir Benjamin Tichborne addressed them in a long speech, inquiring whether they did not confess they were justly condemned, and merited death.

To this they assented, without reserve, and the Sheriff announced to them that the King, in his great mercy, had determined to spare

their lives. A full pardon, however, was not given; and Lords Cobham and Grey were destined to endure a long and painful imprisonment, terminated in the case of the first by his escape being connived at, and he himself allowed to drag out a few years in the most abject poverty and misery, till a wretched death, hastened by actual want, filth, and wretchedness, terminated the sorrows of a man who not long before had been one of the most wealthy peers of the realm. The proud and eager spirit of Lord Grey brought his career to an earlier close; and that most common of all diseases, which has obtained—why or wherefore I know not—the name of a broken heart, terminated his sufferings a few years after. Markham and several of the inferior conspirators were banished from the realm; and of one of them, at least, we shall have to speak hereafter. Raleigh, as all the world knows, was suffered to languish in prison for many years, with a capital sentence hanging over his head, and destined in the end to be one of the most illustrious victims to the tyranny and injustice of a base and low-minded king.

Thus did James contrive even with mercy to mingle tyranny, to deprive apparent clemency of all real lenity, and to display the pitiful frivolity of his nature in the solemn exercise of his holiest and his highest prerogative. There were not one of those, except Markham, whom he reprieved at Winchester, to whom immediate death would not have been pity, compared with the fate for which he reserved them ; and yet the country rang with applause even while the spirit of historic truth stamped the act with the infamous brand it deserves.

CHAPTER II.

SUCH, then, as we have seen in the last chapter, was the termination of the conspiracy in which the name of Arabella Stuart was employed by bad men, for their own purposes, without her own will or consent. But what had in the meantime become of that sweet girl herself, whom we left at the inn at St. Neot's, ill in body and in mind. Several days passed before she recovered entirely, and the learned physicians who had been called from Cambridge to attend upon her, asserted that she had undoubtedly partaken of some poisonous substance.

Arabella herself was incredulous, and attributed in her own mind the fit of sickness which had overtaken her, to the care and anxiety which she had previously endured. But the learned doctors assured her that perhaps it might be a fortunate event she had taken this poison, as

under the good management with which she had been treated, it would act as an antidote against the infection of the plague, which in all probability she would otherwise have caught, as the case of Sir Harry West was undoubtedly one of a pestilential character.

In the meantime, at the old Manor House at Bourne, the good knight lay upon a bed of sickness: and in the close and heated room, watching the death-like countenance, bathing the burning brow with the essences used in those days, holding the refreshing cup to the parched lip, and smoothing the rough pillow of fever, day and night, sleepless, tearless, noiseless, sat Ida Mara, repaying with devotion unto death the first benefit that she had received at the hands of man. And he felt all her kindness; he would gaze in her face with almost the tenderness of a father, and, could he have shed tears, his eyes would often have filled, as he thought that, in a few short days, she might be lying in the same burning agony that he then felt, or that fair form might be blighted, and given up to the corruption of the grave as the consequence of her

efforts to save him. It was not alone that he saw she mingled skill with kindness, that with her own hands she made drinks for him which tasted grateful even to his parched tongue, that he seemed to obtain relief from many of the simples that she prepared, and that it was evident that she had learned not a little of the best part of the healing art, while in the house of the Druggist—it was not this alone which made him willingly take all that she administered, and obey her lightest word, as if she were old and he were young; but it was that he would not give her an instant's pain or uneasiness in the course of her anxious attendance; and even in the delirium which at length came on, her voice would soothe him, her entreaties keep him tranquil, when no effect was produced by either those of his old servant Lakyn, or those of the good housekeeper Dame Cicely, who were the only persons that would venture to remain in the house as soon as it was discovered that the disease was really the plague.

At first, when the poor Italian girl was left behind by Arabella, the housekeeper had shown

some indignation at what she considered the intrusion of a stranger, and had ventured upon more than one, "Marry come up!" with the word "Minx!" muttered in a low tone, so that her good master could not hear it.

A short conversation, however, with Matthew Lakyn, a good deal mitigated her anger, and when she witnessed the anxious care of Ida Mara for the old knight, and saw her wipe the tears of apprehension from her eyes, when sometimes she quitted his chamber for an instant, she could not help saying to herself, "Well, thou art a good creature, and a devout. There are not many like thee in thy country, I'll warrant. Thou art almost as kind as if thou wert English bred and born."

At length came the climax of the disease; and during a long and fearful night, Ida Mara knelt by the bedside of her benefactor, pouring forth low murmured prayers in her own tongue, to the great Physician who alone can cure. The old man was no longer sensible to anything that was said, and though he talked continually, it was but with the mutterings of delirium, while

his eye ranged coldly round the chamber, and seemed to see strange sights. Often Ida Mara held his hand in hers, and often put her small fingers on the pulse, till at length, towards morning, she ran down to Lakyn, who had left the room about half an hour, and said, "He must have wine!"

"What, girl," cried the old housekeeper, "in the plague?"

"Ay," said Ida Mara, "he must have wine!—The change has come on, his pulse is low and faint, if he have not wine now, he will be dead ere six hours be over. Little, and that cautiously must be given, but he must have it, if you would save him."

Dame Cicely looked at the old servant, and the old servant at her; but the girl spoke in a tone of authority, and Lakyn answered, "I had better give it her; wine is a good thing at all times, and if that wont save him I fear nothing will.—What shall it be, my dear, sack?"

"No no," cried the girl, "no fiery wine; neither sack nor Burgundy."

"Good soft wine of Bordeaux," replied the old man; "I will fetch it in a minute."

“Why, where learned you all this leechcraft?” asked Dame Cicely, while he ran down into the cellar.

“In part from the bad man from whom my benefactor delivered me,” answered Ida Mara; “but it was of the plague my mother died; and a good and great mediciner of my native town afterwards told me, what we should have done to save her.—Oh, here is the wine. Now give me one of those spoons—that one, that one.”

“What matters it, girl?” said the old housekeeper, reaching the spoon to gratify her.

“Do you not see,” said Ida Mara, “this has got the image of St. Luke, the good physician, upon it?” and, while the old housekeeper called her a poor benighted papist, the girl hastened back to the bedside of the old knight, and from time to time moistened his lips with the wine.

Just as the day dawned fully in the sky, Sir Harry West closed his eyes, and fell into a gentle sleep, and when the housekeeper stole in, about an hour after, she found him still in the same, while Ida Mara, kneeling by his bedside, and utterly exhausted by long watching, had

suffered her fair head to droop forward on the bed clothes, and was buried in slumber also.

She withdrew without waking them, and till nearly noon the knight remained asleep. When he woke, all delirium was gone, and, though reduced to infant weakness, he was evidently better. His amendment was steady though slow, but would probably have been more rapid had it not been for the apprehensions he felt for his tender nurse, on whose cheek the rose had become somewhat pale, and whose eye had grown dim and heavy. These, however, were only the natural effects of anxiety and watching; and as soon as she could leave him, to enjoy the breath of the free air, her colour and her health returned.

It is a curious fact, indeed, but one not by any means rare in cases of pestilential disease, that none of those who remained with the old knight during his sickness, and saw him continually during the whole course of the malady, were infected by it; while three of the servants, who fled from the house after seeing their master only for a few minutes, were stricken with the plague, and died in the neighbouring hamlets,

carrying the disease with them to the cottages of their relations. A firm and steadfast mind is one of the best preservatives against pestilence, as well as against many another evil.

For some months the house was shunned ; and it was not till the plague began to disappear from England, that Ida Mara ventured to return to her fair mistress. She did not do so, however, without being rendered by the act of Harry West independent of human caprice. He could, indeed, have found it in his heart never to part with her ; but evil-tongues were as prevalent in those days as in our own, and even age and respectability cannot hope for impunity from the malice or folly of men. He thought, too, that it would be better for the devoted girl herself to be about the person of one so kind and good as Arabella Stuart ; and by settling upon her, with all legal form, a hundred crowns a year—then a considerable sum—he secured her against any change in the favour or fortunes of her mistress.

Arabella welcomed her back with great satisfaction, and never from that moment ceased to

regard her with affection and esteem. The deep and fearless devotion which she had displayed, was of a character to touch most powerfully the heart of one who knew how much such sincere attachment is needed by persons in high stations, and how seldom it is found. She was no longer considered as her servant ; but more as her companion and her friend, in all those circumstances in which her inferior rank suffered her to take a part ; and great was the consolation and comfort to Arabella herself, in all the pains, and cares, and anxieties of a Court, to have one always near her, on whose truth, sincerity, and regard, she could fully rely.

The reader, learned in the history of those times, will know that, to a high toned mind and feeling heart, the Court of England under the reign of James I. was a place of constant trial, anxiety, and grief. Even had not the sickening selfishness, vulgarity, and wickedness of the King himself, affected greatly the comfort of all around him, the lightness of the Queen's manners, though perhaps not running to criminality, and the encouragement given to vice of every kind, ren-

dered the palace a painful as well as disgusting abode, for any one of a pure spirit.* The freedom, indeed, from all those formal restraints which are, in fact, the shackles that vice imposes upon virtue, might prove not disagreeable even to a noble mind like that of Arabella Stuart. To go whithersoever she would unwatched and uncensured, to see whomsoever she would, without care or without fear, to be as free in her actions as her own principles would admit, could never be productive of any harm in one who sought not to abuse such liberty. But it was remarked of her, that, unless when obliged to do so, as one of the queen's train, she rarely, if ever, adopted the much misused habit of the day, in wearing a mask when travelling, or walking abroad. She wished her actions to be as free as the sunshine, but as open also.

In the meantime, a number of important events occurred, which require but brief notice here.

* I need only cite the instance of Lady Rich, who was one of the public and favourite companions of Anne of Denmark while undergoing the ordeal of the ecclesiastical courts on the charge of notorious adultery, fully established against her.

The quarrels of the King with his Parliament, his efforts to tread under foot the right of his people, his persecution of the Puritans, his bad faith with the Roman Catholics, the rise and discovery of the famous Gunpowder Plot, and the well merited execution of the diabolical conspirators, are all matters irrelevant to this history.

Not so, however, the advance in favour of one of the first minions whom the king thought fit to honour in England, Robert Carr, afterwards Earl of Rochester, one of the most despicable of those who were proud to fill the infamous place of king's favourite. This man, by birth a Scotchman, had passed some time in France, and had added the advantages of a graceful carriage, and good taste and skill in dress, to that of a remarkably handsome person. He was first introduced to the Court of England by the Lord Dingwall, who selected him as his Esquire at one of the tilting matches of the day. Some have supposed that he was purposely brought into such a situation, in order to attract the attention of the king, whose fondness for handsome and

well-dressed minions was notorious. However that may be, Carr, in presenting to the king, according to custom, the shield and device of his knight, was thrown in descending from his horse at the monarch's feet, and broke his leg by the fall. James had previously noticed with great admiration the handsome Squire of the Lord Dingwall, and showed the utmost concern for his accident. The young Scotchman was removed to the palace, attended by the king's own surgeon, visited daily by James himself, and during the long hours of his convalescence won every hour upon the weak Monarch's regard, till he rose from the bed of sickness in the full glow of royal favour.

The dignity of knighthood was almost immediately profaned to do honour to this deedless and unworthy person ; revenues were assigned to him ; the king's ear was completely in his power ; and many an hour was spent by the Monarch every day in teaching him the Latin language, of which he had no knowledge, though, as Lord Thomas Howard justly observed, " it would have

been better to teach him English, as he was sadly deficient in that tongue."

Leaning on his arm, pinching his cheek, smoothing his ruffled garments, James displayed himself to his Court, with his new favourite, in a most painful and degrading point of view. But fortunately for Carr himself, he was enabled to escape for some time, the enmity which his unenviable position, and his own worthlessness, must have much sooner called upon him, had not a piece of real good-fortune happened to him, in the rise of a friendship between himself, and one, whose experience, moderation, talents, and discrimination, supplied all that was wanting in the mind of the favourite.

It would appear that Sir Thomas Overbury, the person of whom we speak, had first been greatly noticed by Cecil, (now become Earl of Salisbury,) an unquestionable proof that he possessed real talents for business. After a time, however, either because he saw in the favour of Robert Carr, the more speedy means of his own advancement, or from some other cause that we do not know, Overbury sincerely attached himself

to the favourite; and gaining a great ascendancy over his mind, he guided him in all his proceedings with a remarkable degree of wisdom and sagacity.

By degrees, the minion rose from the condition of a poor Scotch Gentleman, unknown and unheard of, to the station of Viscount Rochester, and the ruler of the Court of England. He affected to behave himself with good moderation and modesty, and suffered all the power and authority which was poured into his hands, to proceed apparently more from the Monarch's spontaneous act than from his solicitation. The office of Lord Treasurer of Scotland was bestowed upon him, and a number of other inferior posts; but still Carr laboured assiduously, to divert the envious jealousy of the English courtiers from himself; and, as the best means of satisfying them, he excluded from his household all persons of his own nation, except one, who was attached to him by the ties of blood.

At length, however, an event occurred which changed his views, his conduct, and his destiny. There appeared at the Court, a lady, who,

though yet in her extreme youth, had been for some years married to the son of the unfortunate Earl of Essex. She was second daughter of Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk. Her elder sister having married the son of the famous Robert Cecil, the alliance between the families of Suffolk and Essex was brought about by Lord Salisbury, with a view of healing the breach between himself and the house of Devereux, to the memory of whose late chief, he knew the king, his master, to be devotedly attached. But as the son of the unfortunate Essex, was but fifteen years of age, at the time the marriage was proposed, and the Lady Frances Howard, the bride, had not yet completed her thirteenth year, the young earl was sent abroad to travel for some time, immediately after the ceremony, leaving his childish bride to be educated in her paternal house.

The countess of Essex was not yet sixteen when she was introduced to the Court of James ; and, possessed of youth, extraordinary beauty, and some talent, she soon attracted universal admiration, to which she showed herself not at all in-

different. According to the libertine manners of the day, the object of admiration became immediately an object of pursuit, whatever obstacles morality might interpose; and Prince Henry himself, the eldest son of the king, appeared as one of the suitors of the fair countess. She, on her part, showed herself cold and indifferent to the solicitations of the prince; not, indeed, that her bosom was the abode of any pure feelings or high principles, but because she had already conceived a passion for another, to which she was ready not only to sacrifice every moral obligation, but to violate common decency, which is sometimes powerful over minds that do not scruple to cast off every other restraint.

Rochester, however, the object of her criminal love, courted and flattered for his power, either did not see the views of the countess in endeavouring to attract his attention, or was really indifferent towards her, and for some time escaped her wiles; but ere long she found a disgraceful means of making him acquainted with the passion he had inspired, and it soon not only became reciprocal, but rose to a height in the bosoms of both,

which led them to the commission of some of the most terrible crimes with which the soul of man can be stained.

It was about the time at which the preference of the Countess of Essex for the king's favourite, first began to master every consideration of virtue and propriety in her bosom, that those events occurred in the history of Arabella Stuart which recall us to the narration of adventures more immediately connected with this tale ; and, merely begging the reader to remember that several years had past since William Seymour sailed from England, without his obtaining permission to return from the honourable banishment to which he had been condemned, we shall here end this brief sketch of the intervening period.

CHAPTER III.

It was the afternoon of a bright summer day, and a grand tilting match had been held on a piece of ground adjoining the park at St. James's. All the world of the Capital had been admitted to the sight, and as two or three foreign Princes, amongst whom was the King of Denmark, were present on the occasion, numbers of the grave citizens had left their shops and counting-houses in London, and travelled to Westminster to look on, during the royal sports.

As soon as the games were over, the crowds dispersed; and, while some sauntered through those parts of the park which were open to the public, others hurried home to resume their more important affairs, and in every thoroughfare, leading from Westminster to different parts

of the city, groupes of men and women, in holiday attire, were seen hastening on, some laughing and talking over the events of the morning, some with busy faces evidently considering the business they were about to resume.

Amongst the rest, appeared a man of a very showy exterior, richly clothed, and distinguished by a light and tripping step though he was far past even the middle age. He had a boy behind him carrying his sword; his mustachio and hair, which, if one might judge by the shrivelled state of his skin, and the long wrinkles round his eyes, ought to have been grey some twenty years before, were now of a very peculiar cast of black; and though his legs were thin as well as long, his chest seemed full and powerful, owing, perhaps, the appearance of swelling muscle which it displayed, to a process as foreign to that of nature, as the method he had employed to restore the swarthiness of his hair.

While he was hurrying down the Strand—then a wide open road, flanked on one side by the houses and gardens of the nobility—amidst a cloud of dust which the manifold feet were

raising from the dry and unwatered ground, a young man, carrying in his hand a large fan and an essence bottle, singled him out from the other persons who were proceeding in the same direction, and pulled him gently by the cloak. The man started and turned round, asking what the stranger wanted, with a foreign accent, which by practised ears might have been detected as assumed rather than natural.

“My mistress wishes to speak to you, sir,” said the servant, “and will thank you to step across the road to her.”

“I am at her devotion,” replied the person addressed, laying his hand upon his heart; “which is your mistress, my friend?”

“That lady, sir, in the black mantle and mask,” answered the serving-man; “she is waiting for you, you see, at the corner of the lane.”

Now, the lady whom the man pointed out was of a very rotund make, and though her dress was rich enough, yet there was a sad lack of grace in the wearing of it. There were also several indescribable indications which clearly informed the beholder that she had passed what

is called the prime of life. Nevertheless, the smart gentleman, whom we have described, seemed to value her attention fully as much as if she had been the youngest and most graceful of the realm, and with the same dancing-master-like step with which he had been walking homeward, he crossed the road at her invitation, and made her a profound bow.

“Come with me, come with me,” said the masked lady; “I have a turn for your hand, which may be worth your while.”

“Most happy shall I be, madam,” replied the gentleman with a stronger foreign accent than ever, “to accompany you any where, and do my little possible to serve you. But, perhaps, you may be mistaken in your humble servant?”

The lady burst out into a loud fit of laughter; “You can’t cosen me,” she cried. “Hark ye, master, and I’ll whisper a secret word in your ear which will show you that we know one another.”

The gentleman bent down his head, heard what his fair companion had to say, and then, turning again towards her, looked at her from

head to foot, "It can be no other," exclaimed he at length, "than Mrs. Turner!"

"Hush!" cried she, raising her finger, "I am not so indiscreet as to mention any names. Come down the lane with me, there is a wherry waiting, we will go down the river and have some supper at my house. I have an affair in hand, which may make a fortune for two if properly managed, and I was even puzzling my brain as I walked down the Strand, to find a serviceable friend who had courage and wit enough to carry through a delicate affair."

"I'm your man," replied the gentleman in good plain English, accompanying her down the lane, "and I can assure you, sweet woman, that, since I have been attached to a Spanish Ambassador, I have had many a curious operation to perform which required nice handling."

"I doubt it not, I doubt it not, Weston," answered worthy Mrs. Turner, "and so you have been attached to a Spanish Ambassador have you? That is the reason I have not seen you for so long, I suppose?"

"Did you not know," he asked, "that the

Count de Taxis did me the honour of appointing me his domestic perfumer, and carried me abroad with him after he left England? I won the post by composing an odour such as was never smelt by the nose of man before. It had the delicacy of the violet, the power of the rose; and I combined with it a soft ethereal essence which lulled the person who scented it into a soft languor predisposing to love and repose."

"That's just the thing we may want, Master Weston," said the lady, "for we have got to do with love I assure you."

"Can I doubt it," cried Weston, "when you have a share in the business?"

"Come, no nonsense, Master Weston," rejoined the lady, "this is a serious affair I can assure you, by which much may be gained or lost."

"Do not call me Weston," replied her companion in an imploring tone; "I have abandoned that name long, as one casts off an old coat when it is worn threadbare. There was a hole or two in it also, it must be confessed; and I received a severe fright which made me tremble so that it shook me out of my name."

“Why, how was that, how was that?” asked Mrs. Turner; “you are a man not easily alarmed.”

“In general not,” answered her companion, sinking his voice to a whisper; “but I’ll tell you what occurred. One day at an inn, where I was lodging, I saw accidentally a young girl, an Italian, who had once been in my service.”

“I remember her quite well,” replied Mrs. Turner, “and thought you had parted with her to some nobleman.”

“No, no, she parted from me,” rejoined the charlatan in the same low tone, “and took some secrets of mine with her. Seeing her in the inn, and thinking that she was still with an old foolish knight who had maltreated me and carried her off from me, I took occasion to pass through the kitchen as her dinner was preparing. I know not how it was, but, by this time, she was in the service of one of the highest ladies of the land. The broth that was intended for the maid, was taken by the mistress; and a fit of illness came on, which the doctors from Cambridge were fools enough to ascribe to poison.

She recovered in the end, but I was in a great fright, for you know how scandalous the tongue of the world is ; so dropping the name of Weston, and giving my hair another hue, I attached myself to the Count de Taxis, and gave out that I had come to England with him.” *

“ And pray what may be your name now ? ” asked Mrs. Turner ; “ I must tutor my lips not to call you Weston, I suppose.”

“ The name I took,” replied the man, “ was Doctor Foramen, out of honour to a hole in my crucible, in which I once was fortunate enough to obtain a small quantity of the powder of projection. But the fools here, have changed it at once into a vulgar English name, and call me Doctor Foreman.”

“ Udds life ! ” cried Mrs. Turner ; “ are you the Doctor Foreman skilled in magic and astrology, who lives just beyond the walls, by the Inns of Court ? ”

“ The same, sweet lady, the same,” replied

* The perfumer of the Count de Taxis is mentioned by Arabella Stuart herself in one of her letters to her Uncle, the Earl of Shrewsbury.

Weston, with a low bow ; “and a very pretty traffic I carry on, let me assure you.”

“ I ’ll better it, I ’ll better it,” said Mrs. Turner ; “but here we are at the boat.”

A very neat wherry was waiting with a boatman well dressed, bearing his badge upon his arm ; and handing her in, Weston took his seat by Mrs. Turner’s side, while the boy who carried his sword, and the lady’s serving-man, sat in the stern behind them. The proximity of the two latter personages prevented all private conversation, but the lady taking off her mask for the sake of the cool air, displayed what had once been a very pretty face, and which still, considering her age, was in a high state of preservation. Cutting rapidly over the water the boat stopped some short way before it reached the Tower ; and, being handed out with great gallantry by her companion, Mrs. Turner led him through several narrow lanes to a small house, between which and the public street was a little paved yard, with an elm tree growing in the midst of the smoke.

“ This is my house now,” said the lady ; “and you see I, too, have prospered in the world.”

“I see, I see,” answered Weston ; “some friend who has become sensible to your merits.”

“Not alone that,” replied the lady ; “for though Sir Arthur Manwaring bestowed the house upon me, I owe him little more. No, no, I have many a good friend at Court who, for the services I can render them, are right liberal in their payments. But come in, come in, and take a glass of Malmsey with me.”

Thus saying she led him, up a long narrow flight of stairs, to a small well-furnished sitting-room, in which was hung up a viol da gamba, and several other musical instruments, while on the table lay one or two books in velvet covers, which, when taken up, displayed to the curious eye any other subjects than those which men might have supposed, formed the studies of the mistress of the mansion. One was a book of canticles very neatly written ; another was a volume of meditations by some pious divine ; and a third was a still holier book, which it was almost profanation to bring into such a place.

By the orders of his mistress the serving-

man fetched some wine and sweetmeats upon a silver salver and retired, closing the door. The lady helped her guest, and took some wine herself, smacking her lips at the flavour thereof, with more unction than was quite seemly. Weston, however, was intent upon business; and after he had half drained the long measure with its twisted stalk, he set it down, inquiring "Now, sweet Mrs. Turner, what is this great affair?"

"I will tell you, I will tell you," said the lady, drawing her high-backed chair nearer to him. "You must know—take some sweetmeats, Weston—Doctor Foreman, I mean.—You must know that there is a great personage at the Court, of my own sex, and consequently one I am bound to assist in the way of friendship, who is in a very lamentable case—Fill your glass, Doctor, it will bear repeating. This lady is the daughter of one of the king's great friends, and the niece of another—"

"Hum!" cried Weston, laying his finger on the side of his nose; "Lady Cranbourne?"

Mrs. Turner shook her head; "Wrong," she replied, "wrong; but not far wrong either."

“I have it,” said Weston, “the Countess of Essex?”

“I name no names as yet,” answered Mrs. Turner, with a look of affected discretion; “but the lady I mentioned is young, beautiful, and very unhappy, and consequently deserves the compassion and charitable assistance of every one, both man and woman.”

“She shall have it,” said Weston, solemnly, —“if she be rich enough to pay for it.”

“That she is beyond all manner of doubt,” replied Mrs. Turner; “and will pay well, too, I can assure you.”

“Ay, but expound, expound,” cried the charlatan; “what is her ailment? We must know the disease before we can find a cure.”

“Love!” said Mrs. Turner; “Love! ay, and hate, too. She is in love with an object who shows himself indifferent to her charms.”

“The hard-hearted tiger!” exclaimed Weston; “we must soften him, Mrs. Turner.”

“That is the very point,” replied the lady. “But her affliction is greatly increased by her having a husband, to whom she was married in

her childhood, who has just returned to England, and to whom she must go home in a few days if something be not done to prevent it."

"A perilous case," said Weston; "yet there is a remedy for all things.—Now what does the lady require?"

Before Mrs. Turner could answer, a quick foot was heard running up the stairs; and the next moment a maid servant entering the room exclaimed, "Madam, madam, there's a lady must see you instantly!"

Mrs. Turner started up, crying, "Into the other room behind there!" But while the words were still upon her tongue, another figure presented itself at the door; and a lady with a large Spanish mantilla over her shoulders, and the ordinary black velvet mask upon her face, entered with a step hasty indeed, but full of grace, pausing suddenly when she saw that there was a stranger in the room.

"Who is that?" she asked, in the tone of a princess, pointing to Weston, with her hand still covered by a rich glove of red and gold; "Did you not get my message?"

“No, madam,” replied Mrs. Turner in humble accents; “I have been out all the morning. This is Doctor Foreman, madam, the famous physician and astrologer.”

“What, the man we were talking of?” cried the lady; “Oh, then I am very glad, it so falls out. You may leave the room, girl,” she continued, addressing Mrs. Turner’s maid; “what stand you there for?”

The servant instantly retired and closed the door, at the imperious mandate she received; and the lady, casting her mantilla on a chair, withdrew the mask from her face, displaying to the admiring eyes of Weston, one of the most beautiful creatures he had ever beheld. The complexion was clear and resplendent, every feature beautifully cut, the large dark eyes shining like living diamonds, the parted lips, showing the pearly teeth beneath, the neck, the shoulders, and every rounded limb, full of grace and loveliness; but there was a certain contraction of the marble brow, and keenness, almost fierceness, in the sparkling eyes, which spoke too plainly the eager and passionate spirit within that exquisite

form. The charlatan had risen when she entered ; and she now turned her bright unblenched eye upon him, scanning his features, as if she thought by them to discover, whether the man before her possessed, in reality, the powers which were attributed to him. Weston, however, was finished in his trade ; and he replied to her glance with one as keen ; and after having remained in silence for a moment he said, " Perhaps, madam, I had better retire. You may have business with Mistress Turner ? "

" No, stay," replied the lady, thoughtfully ; " I want you.—Has this good woman told you who I am ? "

" No, madam," answered Weston ; " she has never mentioned your name to me. I have but this instant arrived."

" Do you know me, then ? " demanded the lady, quickly.

" No," he answered, in a decided tone : " I never saw any one so beautiful before ! "

" Pshaw ! " said the lady with a smile ; " what is the use of beauty ?—Are you a foreigner ? "

" The country of my birth," answered the

charlatan, "is unknown; but I have studied long in foreign universities, and may have a Spanish or Italian accent."

"A very strong one of some kind, I know not what," replied the lady. "Hark ye, sirrah! are you a true man, or an impostor?"

"My sublime art, madam, does not permit of my telling an untruth," rejoined Weston. "The moment I did so, I should lose all power and knowledge. Do not think, madam, that the height of science can be obtained by deep study alone. The mind must subject itself to certain rules, fixed and decided, amongst which the telling truth upon all points of art, is the great fundamental. I may refuse to answer you, if I will; but, if I do answer, the nicest judging eye must not be able to discover one grain of deceit in all I say."

"Well then," exclaimed the lady, "tell me under what misfortunes I suffer, if you would have me believe you skilful as you pretend."

"First, madam, let me know your name," said the artful man; "that, at least, I ought to be made acquainted with."

“No, no,” answered she, to whom he spoke, “that were half the history. My name you shall know, if you satisfy me.”

“This is hard,” cried Weston with assumed mortification. “You must not tax science more than it can bear—I will speak as I believe, however; though mind, I tell you beforehand, that I cannot be so sure, as if I knew your name, and the hour of your nativity—madam, will you let me see your hand?—the right hand, if you please; and you, Mrs. Turner, in the meanwhile, ask my boy for my sand-glass and square.”

The lady drew the glove from her fair and beautiful hand, and stretched it out for the inspection of the charlatan, who gazed upon the few lines in the soft and glossy palm with an air of apparently deep consideration.

“Ha!” he cried, “I see you are under eighteen years of age.”

“A good guess,” said the lady. “What more?”

“We will wait a little,” answered Weston;

“I could say more even now, but I would fain consult the sand first.”

As he spoke Mrs. Turner, who had left them, returned, bearing in her hand a small glass box filled with very fine sand, and a flat silver ruler, with a moveable limb at a right angle, which she delivered into the hands of her male companion.

“Bless my heart, doctor,” she cried; “I hope there is going to be no magic—I cannot suffer magic in my house, for any one.”

“Nothing but natural magic, Mrs. Turner,” replied the impostor, “which is quite lawful. Every part of nature has its secrets, which it is the province of science to discover, and also its sympathies with every other part, from which sympathies, when revealed in one instance, we gain a knowledge of all that affects other beings, sympathised with by the object under our hands. Thus this common sand, when brought under certain influences, displays its relationships to different parts of creation; and especially, as it is fluctuating and unsteady, light, and blown about by every gust of wind, exactly like the

course of human life, so does it bear a near affinity to human beings, and discovers, when compelled, their fate and circumstances."

The lady had listened with deep attention to every word of the rigmarole which the man uttered ; and the reader must not be surprised at a wild, passionate, ill-educated, unprincipled girl of eighteen years of age being deceived by visionary nonsense, which has convinced the mind, ay, and disturbed the brain, of persons otherwise deserving the name of sages and philosophers. The charlatan next took the sand, smoothed it exactly in the glass box, seemed to look anxiously for every irregularity, ascertained that it was of an equal height on either side, and then drew, with the sharp end of a silver ruler, several signs and figures round the edges, leaving a space vacant in the middle.

"Now, madam," he said, "take this instrument, and write the first letter of the christian and surname of any person you think fit. It may be either your own, or that of some one else ; but you must have a very deep interest in that person."

The lady considered for a moment, and then wrote lightly in the sand the letters R. C. Weston then took the glass box and raised it gently from side to side, suffering a part of the sand to roll over the figures that had been drawn. He next gazed at the surface attentively ; and setting the instrument down with a look of surprise and respect, he took a step back and bowed low to the lady.

“Why, what is the matter now?” she exclaimed emphatically.

“I did not know your ladyships’s high rank,” he replied ; “and I fear, what I have to say may offend you.”

“No, no, speak what you have to say,” she answered ; “if it be true, I shall find no offence.”

“The geomantic science can never speak ought but truth,” answered the charlatan ; “and by its rules I tell you, that you love where you ought not, and love not where you ought.”

“Ought !” cried the lady with her cheek reddening ; “am I to have constantly that hateful bond thrust upon me, contracted in my in-

fancy, when I was incapable of judging for myself?"

"I feared you would be offended, madam," said Weston, well pleased to see the effect of his words, but affecting a tone of grief and apprehension. "Nevertheless, I told you that I must speak the truth, if I spoke at all."

"Well, well," she replied; "I deny not that it is the truth—so much for the present: now for the future. Can you speak of that? Shall I be successful in my love—whether it be right or wrong?"

"Oh yes, my lady, never fear," said Mrs. Turner in a coaxing tone; "every woman who sets her heart upon it, can be successful in her love if she chooses. Men are not such coy creatures as we are."

"Hush, woman! let him speak," cried the countess imperiously; "I hate such wheedling. I would know by his science, what fate has in store."

Again Weston approached the table and scanned the sand glass earnestly. "Madam," he said, "I think you will obtain all that you

desire ; but it will be with great difficulty, the most skilful management, and with the assistance of many curious and important arts. You see, madam, that the sand has rolled completely over the name of Robert Carr."

"Robert Carr!" exclaimed the lady, almost with a shriek. "That name was not written there!"

"Oh yes, madam, it was," replied the impostor; "you only traced R. C., but other hands than yours filled up the names at once, for the eye of science. But, as I was saying, you see the sand has rolled over that name; while your sign, which is here, remains clear and uneffaced, showing that you may obtain great power over him. But you will perceive also, that between it and the House of Fortune—I wish it to be all clear to you—a wave has grown up, which threatens great obstacles; while these two stars, signifying two skilful and attached servants of your ladyship, I know not whom, remain powerful over the object of your wishes. Here are two or three others, all more or less

powerful in their degree ; and here your nearest relation stands strong in opposition."

"My father !" cried the lady.

"But at the same time, his co-ordinate looks favourable ; and the sign of another near relation is not adverse. But still, after all, these two small stars, though seemingly very inferior, are, as you see, most powerful for your purposes."

The lady had leaned her elbow on the table, and was covering her eyes with her hand. "This is very extraordinary !" she murmured ; "if I had even told the woman who it is.—Have you anything more to say ?" she continued aloud.

"Nothing, madam," he answered ; "this is all that geomancy can tell me ; but if you think fit to come to my house to night, and the stars be out, as most likely they will, I can give you more information ; and can only say, that as far as my poor skill extends in any way, either as astrologer or physician, skilled in many arts unknown in this country, I am right willing to serve so beautiful and high a lady until death."

"I will employ you, I will employ you,"

replied the lady ; “ and, if you do serve me, you shall be rewarded beyond your hopes. Now tell me, whom do these two stars indicate ? ”

“ I know not, madam,” replied Weston ; “ but certainly they must be two very skilful persons. Perhaps I may myself be one.”

“ Perhaps so,” said the lady,—“ come to me to night, good Mrs. Turner, to Northampton House, just as the clock strikes nine, it will then be growing dark, and we will away to the good doctor’s house—There is some gold for you.—Hark, a word in your ear ! Explain to him all I told you—the name he has divined is but too true. Tell him, tell him ! For though, I know not why, I feel no shame in this matter, yet I would fain some other lips began the tale.”

Thus saying, she fastened the mask upon her face again, threw the mantle over her shoulders, and left the room.

Mrs. Turner approached the casement, gazed out for a minute through the dim lozenges of glass, and then turning round to Weston, burst into a low but merry laugh.

CHAPTER IV.

WE must now hurry the reader, from the gay capital, to a small hunting seat at Royston, in which the King took peculiar delight, on account of the woods and wild forest scenery in which that part of the country abounded at the time we speak of, and which afforded him the opportunity of enjoying at liberty his favourite pastime of the chase.

According as caprice dictated, the monarch would go either in private, accompanied by his favourite and a few of those whom he condescended to look upon as his friends, or with the whole Court, which was then packed into very narrow compass, many of the domestics and attendants being lodged out in the cottages round about, and the whole country swept by the King's purveyors to provide for the royal

household, much to the annoyance of the poor inhabitants, who saw their fowls, their butter, their eggs, and their milk, carried away against their will. Nor was this the only inconvenience they suffered. Had they received full and ready payment for the food, which was taken, as it were, from their very mouths, they might have contented themselves. But such was not the case, and it was not till after long delays, and the deduction of an enormous per-centage to the greedy officers of the King, that they obtained a scanty and illiberal compensation for the actual loss they sustained.

On the present occasion, the whole Court were at Royston ; and so many human beings were crowded into the palace, that it was only when the hounds were abroad, and the greater part of the courtiers following the King to the chase, that anything like quiet and tranquillity was to be found in the building.

Such, however, was the case one morning ; when Arabella Stuart, who had accompanied the Queen to Royston, after wandering out for a short time, returned towards the house with a paper in

her hand, followed a step behind by an honest Hertfordshire farmer, to whom she spoke from time to time.

On the terrace before the palace, she turned to the man, saying, "Well, my good friend, I cannot undertake to give it to the King himself, because he is easily offended at such matters; but I will place it in the hands of those who can venture more boldly than I can, and who, I doubt not, will see right done to you."

The man bowed and withdrew; and Arabella, entering the vestibule, inquired of one of the servants, who sat there enjoying the usual listlessness of a palace, if Lord Rochester had gone with the King. The man replied in the affirmative, and she then asked, "Is Sir Thomas Overbury in the house?"

"Yes, lady," replied the man; "I saw him a minute ago, writing letters in the cabinet on the left hand at the top of the stairs."

Arabella immediately proceeded thither, and, opening the door, went into the cabinet, where she found a young man of a handsome person and agreeable expression of countenance, with

a high forehead, dark eyes, and a look of intense thought, not unmingled with melancholy, in his face—that calm and thoughtful gloom which is generally found in men of great ambition. He was writing with a rapid hand and eager eye, and did not look round when the door first opened. The moment after, however, the lady's step caught his ear; and, raising his face, he instantly started up when he saw her.

“Good morning, Sir Thomas Overbury,” said Arabella, advancing to the table: “I have a favour to ask of you.”

“To do so is to confer one, madam,” replied the knight, advancing and placing a chair: “pray be seated, and let me know your will. It has but to be known to be obeyed by me.”

“You are very kind, Sir Thomas,” answered Arabella, taking his words as a mere matter of compliment; “but I know you are always willing to do the best in your power for those who suffer by any of the abuses which occasionally follow every Court. This paper is a petition from a poor farmer in the neighbourhood against some of the King's purveyors, who have unnecessarily,

it seems, swept off the whole stock of his farm ; and, because he remonstrated, have cut down the trees before his dwelling.* Neither have they as yet paid him for anything, nor even allowed his account."

"Alas, madam !" replied Overbury, with a sorrowful expression of countenance, "this is but one out of some twenty or thirty. What do you wish me to do with it?"

"Merely to ask Lord Rochester," replied Arabella, "to deliver it into the King's own hand, and, if possible, to obtain justice for the poor man."

Sir Thomas Overbury took the paper, and looked at the amount claimed. "I believe, madam," he answered, "that my Lord of Rochester would rather pay the money out of his own purse, than present this to his Majesty. The former I will undertake he shall do, at your request."

"Nay," replied the lady, "that is not what I could desire. It is the King's own debt, not

* Such acts were not at all uncommon in the reign of James I.

Lord Rochester's. Neither could I, as you may easily understand, make any such a request to his lordship."

Sir Thomas Overbury smiled: "You might make any request, madam, that you pleased, and be quite assured," he said, "that your request would immediately become his wish."

Arabella was somewhat surprised at the very courteous terms of Sir Thomas Overbury; for, although he had always treated her with due respect and attention, there was no intimacy subsisting between them, and even less between herself and Lord Rochester.

"You are very kind," she answered; "but all I can desire is, that his lordship would present the petition to the King, who I feel very sure will grant it at his request."

"Ah, madam!" replied the Knight, "you know not how difficult it is to get petitions acceded to; but I hope, if my Lord Rochester succeeds in this, he may be equally successful, should he some day be a petitioner to your ladyship."

Accustomed to flattering speeches, to praises

of her beauty, and to hints of deeper attachment, which her high rank prevented those who felt it from declaring more openly, Arabella might have thought little of the pointed expressions of Sir Thomas Overbury, had there not been a seriousness in his tone and manner that alarmed her.

She rose then immediately, and again thanking him for his civility was about to retire; but he stopped her, saying, "One moment, lady: I have long wished for an opportunity of speaking a few words to you." He then paused and hesitated, while Arabella remained silent, gazing upon him with an anxious and inquiring look.

"Perhaps, madam," said the knight, at length, "you may think me very officious and impertinent, but if I be so, it is from my sincere regard to two high persons, whose fortunes much depend upon each other."

"I really do not know, sir, what you mean," replied Arabella.

"I will explain myself," continued Sir Thomas Overbury. "My Lord of Rochester, my kind

master and very good friend, is noble as you know by birth, but has risen from a very poor estate to the highest power and authority in this realm, under the King. You are aware with what favours his Majesty has loaded him, what wealth he has bestowed upon him, and what confidence he places in him."

"I doubt not," replied Arabella, "that he is worthy of it all; and, indeed, I know him to be liberal and kind to the poor, more modest than most favourites would be in his household and demeanour, and moreover devoted to the King, of which we have a striking instance, as I hear, the other day, in giving five-and-twenty thousand pounds in gold to the officers of the revenue, when he found the King's treasury was empty. If you suppose, Sir Thomas, that I am one of those who envy him his good fortune, or deny him good qualities from jealousy of the King's favour, you are quite mistaken."

"Madam, I know your noble heart too well," said Overbury, "to suspect it of harbouring such pitiful feelings; and, dealing with you simply in frankness and candour, I was about

to lay before you the evils as well as the advantages of my Lord Rochester's position, trusting to your honour never to reveal that which I shall say."

"Of that you may be quite assured," replied Arabella.

"Well then, madam," continued the knight, "you see Lord Rochester as he now stands at the height of power and favour, courted and flattered by all men, each day advancing in wealth and distinction, and having every vacant office in the state at his disposal. Young, too, he is, and certainly most strikingly handsome, with health unimpaired by the various vices of the day, by drunkenness, or dissolute living, so that, in all probability, his life will be long preserved. But, at the same time, it must not be concealed that all this fabric of greatness stands at present on a frail foundation. I do not mean the favour of the King, for that I believe, unless from some great fault on his lordship's part, will only be terminated with the King's life. But, lady, I am now going to say what I would venture to no other ears than yours :

the King's life itself is uncertain—his physicians do not augur that it will be a long one. The violent exercises of the chase, to which he addicts himself so passionately, daily wear down the powers of a constitution naturally feeble. A thousand accidents too might happen to deprive us of our sovereign ; and, were he gone, the apparent enmity of the Prince, would easily find means to effect my lord's ruin, unless his friends can contrive to fix his fortunes upon a stronger foundation than at present. Now, lady, will you forgive me if, leaving the picture of this nobleman's fate, I turn to paint that of another—your own ?”

“ I fear,” said Arabella, who felt her heart beating with apprehension of what was to come next, “ I fear the Queen may require me, I have been absent long.”

“ I will not detain you many minutes,” replied Sir Thomas Overbury ; “ but, indeed, you must hear me out : it is but justice to me after what I have said. You yourself, madam, as I know you feel, are placed in a very peculiar and painful position.”

Arabella seated herself, and leaned her head upon her hand.—“Of the highest rank that subject can attain to,” continued the knight, “the next heir to the Crown, failing the King and his royal children, with less wealth than your merits well deserve, and denied all power and influence, the object of vain conspiracies to every idle traitor, and of jealous apprehension to your royal cousin, you are denied the only consolation that could be afforded to such a fate, by being shut out from domestic happiness on motives of state policy.”

“True !” said Arabella with a sigh.

“You must have remarked, madam,” continued Sir Thomas Overbury, “that all the many applications for your hand by sovereign princes, who could well pretend thereunto, have been rejected without consulting you ; and so it will ever be. You will be condemned to pass through life without being permitted to bestow on any one in this country, or elsewhere, the greatest blessing to which man can perhaps aspire on earth — the possession of one so charming and excellent a creature as yourself.”

Arabella had been somewhat moved by the first part of his discourse, and she knew that there was but one way to cover her emotion, and to avoid being forced to deal seriously with a matter which she saw might involve her in terrible difficulties if she treated it gravely. She resolved, therefore, to assume that gay and playful lightness of manner which had often been her resource under such circumstances ; and though, for a moment, it cost her a great effort, she replied laughingly, " You must not take it for granted, Sir Thomas, that I had an inclination to accept any of these mighty potentates, even if the King had wished it. The grapes, to be sure, are sour with me, as with the fox in the fable, and I will own that it is always much more agreeable to a woman to have her vanity flattered by the opportunity of saying ' no ' to such tender supplications, than to have them dismissed without her interference. But, nevertheless, I can assure you, upon my honour, that if I had been left to act according to my own will and choice, not one of all these gentlemen who have asked the King for my poor hand should have obtained it. You

cannot say, Sir Thomas, that you have ever seen on my part the least desire that their suit should be approved, or the least disappointment at their rejection."

"Certainly not, madam," answered the knight; "and I can easily conceive that a heart like yours, knowing that domestic happiness is rarely, if ever, obtained in a royal station, would gladly avoid such a state. But still, lady, you must be convinced that if the King refuses you to foreign princes, he will be still more resolute in denying you to almost any of his own subjects."

"To *any*, I should think," replied Arabella.

"To any but one," replied Sir Thomas Overbury, "to whom, in his present mood, he can refuse nothing. Now, lady, listen to all in one word. Your union with Lord Rochester would to him secure first, the inestimable blessing of a wife, whom he could both love and respect—who could both make his home bright and happy, and, by her experience of courts, guide, counsel, and support him; and secondly, would obtain for him such an alliance with those from whom he has most to fear, as would ensure him against

reverse in case of the decease of the King. You would gain an affectionate, warm-hearted, and sincere husband, who would be dependent upon yourself for the stability of his position ; and, instead of being condemned to see life pass by without any of those ties which form a woman's happiness, would at once——”

“Stay, stay, Sir Thomas,” cried Arabella with a gay smile, “do not make the picture too enchanting. Consider, my dear sir, you are wooing for another, who has given no sign of love or hope.—Good faith ! I shall expect, if ever I am to be a wife, to be courted, and flattered, and sought, just as much as other women, or perhaps more. Besides, the King's consent is not gained.—That would be the first step before asking mine, who, poor creature, have little power over my own destiny. Not that the King would not give me every liberty to refuse, I am sure. It is of my accepting only that he is afraid ; and, depend upon it, as this hand is the only boon on earth I have to give, I will make the man who obtains it know its full value. Oh,

I am a true woman ! You do not know me yet, Sir Thomas. I will have all my caprices, too, according to rule and precedent ; and I will make my stipulations like the heiress of an alderman. There must be my dower, and my annual stipend, and my two coaches lined with velvet, and my gentlewomen, and my gentlemen ushers, and my horses, and grooms, and squires of the hand, and my ordinary maids and footmen, and my gowns of apparel, and my common gowns ; and then there must be carpets, and hangings, and couches, and glass, and my sideboard of plate, and my canopy ; and, moreover, I must be a duke's wife, so that nobody may go before me at the court.— Oh ! you cannot imagine all the things that I will require,” she added with a laugh ; “ but, some day, you shall have an inventory of them : and now, good faith ! I must fly to the Queen, for indeed, Sir Thomas, if it were known that I had been talking with you so long, and all about love and matrimony, we should both run a great risk of finding our way to the Tower. Adieu, adieu, with many thanks !”

and thus saying, with a light step and gay air she quitted the room.

The moment she was in the corridor, however, her face resumed its gravity, and she murmured, "Gracious heaven ! when will men cease to make me the object of their ambitious schemes ?"

In the meanwhile, Sir Thomas Overbury stood by the side of the table, and gazed down upon it with vacant eyes, "Yes," he said at length, "yes, her consent is sure, and this lightness but assumed to cover deeper things. That is clear enough. The rest must be done by Rochester, for doubtless, as she says, she will require courting.—The King, too, must be managed ; but that can be done ; and then, with his fortunes fixed upon a basis, that nothing can shake, allied to Royalty itself, and with his doating monarch's whole life before him, he may, indeed do what he will. And I !—Why, is he not my creature, as the King is his ? When, too, he owes the rock on which his fortune is planted to my counsels, he must surely show his gratitude.—He is young, warm-hearted, yet unhardened by a Court ; and, even granted that in a few years

he be corrupted by the invariable selfishness and baseness of such scenes as these, ere then the eagle shall have soared on high, unless fate clip his wings. Give me three years—but three years, and if with the powers of mind I feel within this brain, and the resolution I know within this heart, I rule not in the council chamber and the senate—why, let them kick me forth as a scurvy cur, unfitted for high places.”

Thus thinking, he sat himself down to write again, and did not rise till the sound of the horns warned him that the King and Court were returning.

CHAPTER V.

WITH shouts, and jests, and laughter of no very courtly and dignified a sort, the royal party came up to the terrace ; and James and his favourite, with a number of attendants, mounted the staircase, passed by the room in which Overbury had been writing, and swept on to the royal apartments.

In a minute or two after, Rochester, tall, handsome, and glowing with exercise and merriment, entered the chamber of his secretary, convulsed with laughter, and casting himself into a seat, exclaimed, “ By the Lord ! Overbury, here has been one of the best jests this morning I have ever seen. Did you remark yesterday, how the King asked for Jowler, who was not with the pack ?—his favourite hound, you know, whose voice he swears is a deal sweeter than that of the Italian music-master. Well, to-day, who should

make his appearance but Jowler, with a paper tied round his neck."

"A love letter, perhaps," said Overbury.

"Nothing half so sweet," replied Rochester ; "for if cakes and gingerbread lie in a fair lady's eyes, and honey distils from her lips, as we tell the pretty creatures, sure her pen must be dipped in syrup and spice, but this was all gall and vinegar, though not without spirit too. The King, as soon as he saw the dog, must needs jump off his horse, to let the hound lick him. Maxwell and Boucher would have fain made away with the paper, misdoubting what it contained, I fancy ; but the King would needs see it, and Chaloner, who loves a jest, bitter or sweet, untied the string from under the dog's ears, and humbly presented the paper on his knee to our royal master. At first the King turned red in the face, and his brow pricked up like the back of an old woman's wimple, but then he burst into a horse laugh, exclaiming, "On my life, Master Jowler, thou art a witty dog if this be thine own jest ; but I doubt like many another man's, it is but laid

upon thy shoulders, poor fellow," and thereupon he began kissing him again.

"But the paper, the paper," exclaimed Overbury, "what was written on it?"

"Why faith, these words ; for the King handed it about," answered Rochester,—“these words are something like them, ‘Good Master Jowler, we pray you speak to the King, for he hears you every day, and he will not hear us, that it will please his Majesty to go back to London ; or else the country will be undone. All our provision is spent already, and we are not able to maintain him any longer.’”

"On my life," said Overbury, holding up the petition which he had received from Arabella, "I have here got another song to the same tune."

"What is it, what is it?" asked Rochester.

"A petition from a farmer, against the purveyors," replied Overbury, "which your Lordship must needs present to the King."

"Not I," answered the Viscount, bursting into a laugh, "I will present no more petitions

since that affair of the man Whitstable—you know what the King said.”

“No,” said Sir Thomas, “I never heard.”

“Well, then, I will tell you,” rejoined his companion, “he first read the petition, to please me he said; then, when he saw it was about money, he swore five large oaths, to which I cannot do justice, for they were part Pagan philosophy, and part Christian blasphemy. Then he chuckled for a minute, and then he asked what the man had *ge’en* me. I told him, nothing; and then he called me a *fule*, and said that Whitstable was no better, and so he should not have his money, because he did not know how to show himself thankful to those who asked it for him. No, no, I will present no more petitions.”

“But, in good sooth, you must do so in this case,” said Sir Thomas Overbury, “for it is at the request of a lady.”

“Ay, indeed,” cried Carr, somewhat more interested in the question. “What lady, may I ask, Tom?”

“A very sweet and beautiful one,” replied the knight, “and one that it were better worth your while to please, than all the gerfalcons in the King’s mew, though that’s one high road to his royal graces.”

“Her name, man,” cried Rochester; “you keep me with my wit galloping all through the Court.”

“Draw the bridle then,” replied Overbury, “it is the Lady Arabella Stuart, and if you can contrive to fall from your horse at her feet, with as much success as you did at the King’s, you may so mend your fortunes, as never to risk a fall again.”

“Ay, she is very pretty,” answered Rochester in an indifferent tone, “but hardly tall enough to my mind.”

“I do not know,” replied Overbury, “how that can be; she could not be well higher without being Queen or Princess Royal of England.”

“Yes, she is pretty,” continued Rochester in a musing tone, “but what is that to me? There are many as handsome women in the court, not

quite so stiff and stately in their virtue. Why she and my Lady Rich do not even speak ; and to my taste, Lady Rich is the prettier woman of the two."

"Ay, for a mistress," exclaimed Overbury, "but which would you like best for a wife?"

"Oh! the Lady Arabella," replied Rochester in a decided tone, "but that can be no question with either of them ; for the Lady Rich is the wife of two men already, and the Lady Arabella will never be the wife of any one."

"Except perhaps of Robert Carr, Viscount Rochester, Earl of Something, Duke of Something else," answered Sir Thomas Overbury ; "and I do confess," he added, "that I envy the man who shall have the good fortune to put a ring upon that fair finger. Were it for nothing but herself, her beauty, her grace, her virtues, and her sweet humour, I would not barter her hand against the Indies. But when we think of her rank, and the station she will give her husband—"

"Why, Overbury, you are in love with her," cried Carr, laughing.

“ I wish you were,” answered Overbury ; “ my care for your fate would then be at an end.”

“ It would be of no use,” rejoined Rochester ; “ but come, Overbury, speak out, what is it that you mean ? You know my brains are not worth much, and what I have are sorely shaken with a long gallop. Speak, man, speak, I am ever ready to follow counsel ; and you know Bacon says that you are my loadstar, that ever guides me right.”

“ It often happens, my good lord,” replied Overbury, “ that when you ask me for advice in the very difficult affairs which surround you, I have to consider long and carefully, what is the best course for you to pursue, and even then I may be at times doubtful of the result. But in this case, I have not the slightest doubt. The way lies open before you ; and though you must tread it with care and caution, lest you should meet with a rebuff, it will as certainly lead you to fortune as you advance upon it perseveringly and prudently.”

“ Come, come, Overbury,” exclaimed Lord Rochester, “ do not be eloquent ! A few plain

facts, my good friend, and a word of explanation is all that is required. I don't mean to say positively that I will follow your advice in this matter, though I partly see your aim ; but I will be reasonable, as I always am ; and, if I see good cause and good hope, I will go on."

"Well, then, my lord," said Overbury, "I will just remind you of how you stand. Though it may be an unpleasant task to do so, yet I have never found you shrink from looking the matter in the face. The King's favour is your only stay ; the King's life is your term of office and authority ; for though, perhaps, some of your own countrymen would rally round to support you—which, by the way, I doubt—"

"Oh yes, they would," cried Rochester ; "a Scotchman will always support a Scotchman, if his own interest don't come in the way."

"Yet depend upon it," continued Sir Thomas Overbury, "under a new King, the jealousy of the English would soon clear the Court of your countrymen, who, as you know, can scarce keep their footing in it already."

"That 's very true," cried Rochester ; "why

there's a new satire out against us, Overbury, which made me laugh a good deal last night. It's all the folly of Murray and Sanquhar, as you will see, for the verses upon a Scotchman run—

They beg our lands, our goods, our lives,
They switch our nobles, make love to their wives,
They pinch our gentry, and send for our Benchers,
They stab our sergeants, and pistol our fencers.

Ha ! ha ! ha ! it's not bad, on my life ; but still the conduct of such men as Sanquhar in murdering the fencing-master, and Murray in stabbing the sergeant, can bring nothing but ruin upon themselves and disgrace upon all their countrymen."

"Both acts were done under the influence of strong passion," replied Overbury ; "and where is the man who shall say, to what pitch strong passion may lead him ?"

"Never to murder a man in cold blood," cried Rochester ; "no passion would ever lead you or me to such deeds."

"I do not know," replied Overbury, thoughtfully ; "no man can tell till he is tried ; and he fell into a fit of musing."

It was a strange conversation. There they stood, the murderer and the murdered, the one denying the possibility of acts, which, within a very few short months he himself committed, the other even doubting whether he might not be some time tempted to the deeds of which he was to be soon a victim. As if the question impressed them more strongly than any thing that had passed before, they both remained silent for several minutes, and then Overbury proceeded, returning at once to the former subject.

“Well, my good lord,” he said, “all this shows that however firm you may be in the King’s favour,—of which I believe you possess, as I have said, a lease for life,—a stumbling horse, a stag at bay, or a defluxion on the chest, might cast you from the height of power at any hour and day of the whole year, by his Majesty’s death. He, who fixes his fortune on the favour of another, renders himself doubly mortal. You must try to base yours, my good lord, on something more stable.”

“On what?” asked Rochester.

“On an alliance with the royal blood,” replied Overbury.

His companion fell into thought, which the knight took care not to interrupt; and at length Lord Rochester raised his head, saying, “I understand you now, Overbury; but is it possible? I see two great obstacles.”

“Name them, name them,” exclaimed Sir Thomas; “and I will demolish them in a moment.”

“The first lies with the King,” answered Rochester; “’Tis but the other day, when he refused one of the Electoral Princes for the Lady Arabella, that he afterwards laughed with me in his closet, and said, that though he might like to put two doves in a cage, he would never put two eagles; meaning that he would never consent to her marriage with any one; and of that I am quite sure.”

“With no sovereign Prince most assuredly,” replied Overbury; “for you may easily conceive what a handle might be made of her claims to the throne, in the hands of a foreign power. To any of his own subjects he will have nearly

as much objection ; for fear of breeding strife and contention in the land. But you, my dear lord, are somewhat different from a common subject, you are his friend, his favourite, one on whom he can fully rely.—Nay, nay, do not shake your head ! You do not suppose that if the Duke of York were of age sufficient, he would hesitate to extinguish the claims of the Lady Arabella, by a union with his own son ? Does he consider you as less than his son ? Has he not often declared that he regards you as his own child ? Does he not, in fact, love you infinitely more than any of his own children ?—Nay, to speak boldly and openly to one who, I know, will not betray me, you are right well assured that there is no principle of justice, no maxim of state policy that he would not violate to give you pleasure. Happy for the country that you are not one ever to abuse such influence. No, my noble Lord, you have nothing to do but to praise the Lady Arabella to the King, to admire her eyes, to speak of her exquisite grace, the loveliness of her form, the sweetness of her smile, to sigh often, and look pale,—we can find means

to make the complexion somewhat change—to affect a melancholy, and be no longer cheerful, but as it were by effort. Then, when the King inquires into your gloom, let him wring from you by slow degrees that you love the lady, but yet have never ventured to pay her the slightest court, or show her the least attention, because you know his Majesty's views, and not for the dearest object of your wishes would you cross his slightest purpose. My life to a jerkin of Cordovan, the King proposes to you the marriage himself.—Now, my lord, what is your next difficulty?”

“That lies with the lady,” answered Lord Rochester; “she has never shown the slightest sign of distinguishing me from all the crowd of the Court.”

“Odds life! my lord,” interrupted Overbury, “do you expect a lady to woo you? did she do so, she were not worth your having; and the Lady Arabella is none such. Nay more, my lord, you will have to woo her, and zealously too, but the more difficult the attainment, the more worthy is the prize. You will have to

make her love you, before you can hope for her hand. But yet, as some sort of encouragement, I will tell you that she and I have been talking about you just now, and you already stand well with her. She spoke of you generously and kindly, cited the gift you had lately made to the revenue, and praised your deportment at the Court. Person, too, with all women is no light matter; and to be married to the handsomest man in England, may flatter a woman's vanity, which is the first way to win her love."

"But all flatterers do not succeed with women," said Rochester.

"Because their flattery is too gross, or those, to whom they address it, too clear-sighted," replied Overbury; "the moment it is known to be flattery, it ceases to flatter; and therefore it is, that indirect praise is so much more gratifying than any other. Few have such a stomach as our royal master, who has been compared to many things, but I wonder never to an Ostrich, for he can digest iron if it be well spiced."

"But," asked Carr in a tone of doubt, "can this lady love at all, Overbury? Has she the

feelings and passions of other women ? I could not content me with a cold and indifferent bride ; and I have remarked that whatever proposals have been made for her hand, she has seemed right glad and well pleased when they were rejected—I speak not alone of men whom she has never seen, but when there was a question of Northumberland's son ; and the King took him to task for wooing her, she seemed quite relieved when he retired from the Court, and said, I understand, that, of all the favours the King had conferred upon her, that deliverance was the greatest.”

Overbury smiled, “ You have a right humble opinion of yourself, my lord of Rochester,” he said, “ to compare yourself to Northumberland's clumsy boy, who courted the lady with large eyes and an open mouth, like the whale that swallowed Jonas in the picture. No, no, a woman's heart is like a magazine of powder, well defended and difficult to be got at, but when once reached, ready to take fire in a minute. You must work by the sap and mine, my lord, and I can assure you the ground is not so hard

and rocky as you think. No woman was ever yet insusceptible of love, and there is but one passion that I know of, which can extinguish that magic fire. The blasts of adversity cannot blow it out. It will burn beneath the cold waters of ill-treatment and neglect. In the airless caverns of despair it shines by its own light ; and down to the grave it goes, blazing up, even in death. Nothing, I say, nothing can extinguish it but another fierce flame in the same lamp—that of ambition. It was this that taught Elizabeth to quench the fire that was in her heart as strong as in any on the earth. This made her hold back from Leicester, this guarded her against Essex.”

“ Ay,” said Lord Rochester thoughtfully, “ she is very beautiful ! ”

“ Who ? ” exclaimed Sir Thomas Overbury in surprise, “ Queen Elizabeth ? ”

“ No, no,” answered Rochester laughing, “ she never was, that I know of, and heaven defend me from contemplating her beauty now,—It was Lady Essex I meant.”

“ Yes, so she is,” said Overbury, “ but to the subject, my lord. What say you to my

scheme? If you win the lady you gain security; you build up a fortress round your fortunes which not all the malice of your enemies can ever batter down. Methinks this alone were sufficient to make you strive like an eager horse at a race, to win the golden prize, even were the lady less lovely and less charming than she is."

"Why I say at once," replied Lord Rochester, "that I am yours to do with as you like. The prize is certainly a great one, the only question is,—can I win it? You say I can, and as I never found you wrong, I am willing to believe you right. I will therefore embark in the adventure; but you must be the pilot and steer the ship, and, if you bring it safely into port, the whole honour and one half the profit shall be yours.—But first tell me how I am to deal with the lady; for I am to say to the King, it seems, when I have acted the part of a despairing lover long enough, that I have never moved her to my wishes, for fear of giving him offence."

"Nor must you, nor must you," cried Overbury, "it will be the safest course both with him and her. You must woo as if you wooed

not, never affect in the King's presence to pay her much attention ; but in those moments which must often happen, and which you may make more frequent if you will, when by the chances of the Court, you stand or sit beside her, then ply her with soft words—breathe not the name of love, but there are ways you know right well, to speak without a tongue. Worship her beauty, descant on grace and symmetry, leaving her to take the praises to herself, Tell her the colour of the eyes you love the best, and be sure that the same hues shine under her dark lashes. Have the same tastes ; and, in opinions, only differ with her to yield your own with faint resistance, and give her wit the triumph. Let her perceive, without the slightest boast, that you are sought of other lovely dames, but you seek her alone.—A thousand opportunities must occur ; but, as I have said, you may make many. When the King is at the council, and during all those times at which he needs not your presence, you can seek hers without seeming to do so. Often she walks alone in the gardens or the park.—How easy to cross her solitary ramble, and for a few minutes,—but

for a few—seize the occasion to win regard. Even now, what prevents you from going to her at once, with this petition in your hand, which she left with me for you! Tell her that you had resolved never to present another, but that if it be seriously her wish, your resolution must be broken. Then offer her service, and express some regret that circumstances have not allowed you hitherto to shew her all the devotion which you feel. Follow this line of conduct till the King's consent is gained, and leave it to me, by hints and explanations, to give the true point to all you say."

"Well," said Rochester rising, "I will go at once. Give me the paper," and taking it from the hand of Overbury, he quitted the room.

"Heaven send," exclaimed his friend, "that, in striving to light this flame in Arabella's breast, he may gain a spark of fire himself. Such cold indifference never won a love-suit yet—I cannot believe he will fail, with every advantage of person, youth, grace and beauty—the King's favour—her only chance of marriage?—No, no, no! He cannot fail, that is impossible," and sit-

ting down he leant his head upon his hand, in thought.

Two minutes after, however, Lord Rochester returned. "I cannot find her," he said, "I saw her pretty Italian girl; and, by my life! the maid's as lovely as the mistress.—I should not dislike to have such a fair lute player myself."

"Psha!" exclaimed Overbury impatiently, "Can she place you on the steps of the throne? For heaven's sake, Rochester, take care," he added almost prophetically, "that some sweet mischief, such as this, does not cast you down from where you already stand!"

"Oh, most grave and reverend youth," replied Rochester laughing, "be not afraid of my virtue. I will be as demure as a maid; and though I cannot promise thee, to look at bright eyes without admiration, I'll strangle the naughty sighs between my teeth, so that they reach not fair Arabella's ears—I will now take the paper to the King, and leave him not till I have got a warrant for the money. Then think with what grace I will put it into her own soft hand, and say, that I have brought it to her, because I know

it is her delight to make her fellow-creatures, happy.—I hope the hint is not too broad, Companion, that I look to her to make me happy too ? ”

“ Seriously, seriously, Rochester, I pray you ” said Sir Thomas Overbury, “ remember this is no jesting matter, but one on which your future fate depends.”

“ Grave as a judge will I be,” replied Rochester, “ in all the active part of the drama ; but the performers may laugh behind the scenes, good Overbury. But I will away to the King. There we shall laugh enough, I trow.”

“ Not with that in your hand,” answered Overbury.

“ Why it may cause a storm at first,” rejoined the favourite ; “ but if I find the dear pedagogue is very poor, I will lend his Majesty the money. Then he will call me a *fule*, and the farmer a gowk ; and the business will end in laughter, however it may begin.”

Thus saying he left his friend in the cabinet, giving him a gay nod as he went out. But Overbury could not be cheerful : there was a

heaviness in his heart which he could not account for, which some might think was a presentiment of coming evil ; but it was only the load of manifold cares and ever frowning anxieties, which try the muscles of ambition in its upward course.

CHAPTER VI.

WHO has not heard of the masque at Theobalds —perhaps the most disgraceful scene that ever took place in an English Court ? and yet it is into the midst of that extraordinary spectacle of disgusting excess, that we must lead the reader for a short time, together with some of the fairest and the best of the personages in our tale.

Not long after those conversations took place which we have in the last chapter detailed, the King, the Queen, and the whole Court were invited to spend a few days at the princely mansion of the Earl of Salisbury, to revel with the King of Denmark, who was then visiting England, and had just returned to the capital from a short tour through some of our rural districts.

The presence of this Monarch in England had tended to anything but to improve the morality

or decency of the people. A coarse-minded barbarian with some of the virtues, but almost all the vices of a half savage state, could not, indeed, be expected to aid the progress of civilization in a Court where he was courted, flattered, and looked up to as the brother of a Queen, whose affability of manners, in default of higher qualities, had rendered her undeservedly popular.

It must not be supposed, however, that the higher classes in Great Britain were universally polished, or free from gross faults at the time he came. There were many, it is true, in England, as probably will always be the case, who, in point of demeanour, as well as virtue, of genius, as well as goodness, excelled any others on the earth. But there was a great mass, as there is still and ever will be, noble by birth, but not in heart, high by station, but not in principle. The rude insolence which the Scottish courtiers had brought to the English capital, filled it with feuds and bloodshed; the example of some of the most distinguished women of the Court, spread immorality abroad like a pestilence; and the Ordinary, so admirably de-

picted by Sir Walter Scott, finished the education of the young courtiers in gaming, and the excesses of the table. But it was not alone the house of Monsieur de Beaujeu which was open for such orgies, nor were they persons of high rank who alone frequented such abodes; for, at the time I speak of, there were hundreds of these dens of iniquity, held in different parts of the town, where every man chose his own scale of vice and indulgence, and ruined himself or his neighbours, cut his own throat or run his best friend through the body, according as skill and inclination might combine.

It was to the King of Denmark, however, that the Court owed the gross habit of intoxication, which now became general, and which lasted from that time to a period not long before the present day. He first revived the barbarous notion in the land, that excess of drinking can be honourable, and it spread with extraordinary rapidity through all classes, affecting not alone the men, but the women of the higher ranks. Many lamentable scenes produced by this vice are to be found depicted in the papers of Winwood

and other contemporaries, but perhaps the most celebrated of all, from the disgusting excess to which the beastly sin was carried, took place at Theobalds, on the occasion to which we now refer.

Hospitality reigned in the mansion even to profusion; the cellar was free to any one who might choose to use it; the door of the buttery stood open day and night; and the royal table actually flowed with wine.

For the entertainments of the second day of the royal visit—a masque had been prepared by the owner of the mansion; but it was unfortunately appointed to succeed a grand banquet, at which all the Court were present. As what was then considered a delicate compliment to the King, who continued to affect, notwithstanding the bitter sarcasm of Henry IV. of France, the title of the English Solomon, the masque was intended to represent the visit of the Queen of Sheba to the wise Sovereign of the Jews. The great hall, next to the banqueting room, was fitted up as the temple of Jerusalem; and at the upper end a dais and canopy were raised for the two mo-

narchs, the Queen, and the principal ladies of the Court.

The banquet I will not describe. Suffice it to say, it was over ; and with unsteady steps the kings proceeded to take their seats, with the Queen, and all the principal ladies in attendance upon her. The princess Elizabeth was not present, and Arabella Stuart from her Royal blood, was seated next to Anne of Denmark. Many of the followers of the old Court, who had received but little encouragement from James, had, with laudable feeling, been invited by the Earl of Salisbury ; and amongst the rest, was our good friend Sir Harry West. Though the King took no notice of him, and many of the young courtiers thought fit to wonder how such an antiquated specimen of the Elizabethan days had come thither, the sweet lady, whose tale we tell, had stopped to speak to him as she passed onward to her seat, giving him her hand, and calling him cousin, from his distant relationship to the family of Cavendish.

“ I beseech you, Sir Harry,” she said in a low voice, after a few words of courtesy, “ stand

behind me on the dais, and leave me not, if you can help it. It will be doing me a great service, to let me converse with you, rather than with one who, I fear, may be too near."

"I will be there," replied Sir Harry; and though there is always some difficulty in making such arrangements in a crowded Court, the old knight, proceeding with his usual calm self-possession and firm experience, had reached the back of Arabella's chair by the time she was seated.

The moment after, the Viscount Rochester approached; and, though he was not one to attempt to displace a gentleman of Sir Harry West's years and reputation, he looked a little mortified, and took a position on the other side of the lady, nearer to the Queen. Arabella looked round, to see if her old friend was there; and Rochester, who to his credit, be it spoken, was quite sober, seized the opportunity to bend over her, expressing in courteous terms, though somewhat unpolished language, a hope that she did not suffer from the heat.

The lady replied with all due civility, but briefly; and, as she did so, her eyes were brought

to the opposite side of the circle, where sat some other ladies of the Court; and there, to her surprise, she beheld the lovely countenance of the Countess of Essex gazing upon her with an expression of fierce anger which she could not at all comprehend. Without much care to discover what was the cause, however, and merely following her own plan, she turned instantly to the other side, where Sir Harry West stood a step behind her, and said a few words to him in a low tone. The knight answered, and Arabella rejoined; but their conversation was speedily interrupted by the commencement of the masque.

The gilded and painted pillars, intended for the columns of Solomon's Temple, were suddenly illuminated by girandoles of lights round the capitals; and a flourish of trumpets was heard without, when, followed by numerous attendants, a masked lady, carrying a casket in her hand, and representing the Queen of Sheba, entered the hall and advanced towards the two Kings. The casket was loaded with a variety of shining things, made in sugar, by the art of an Italian confectioner, which, though assuming the form

of jewels and precious stones, contained within, jellies, and syrups, and perfumes. It was remarked by those persons in the Court, who had not themselves paid their devotions too deeply to the god of the grape, that the step of the Queen of Sheba was quite as unsteady as that of her prototype might be supposed to have been upon the sea of glass. She contrived, notwithstanding, to reach the dais; but there, whether her feet failed her, or whether she stumbled over the step, does not appear, but she fell head foremost into the lap of the King of Denmark, bespattering him with her confectionary in a most unseemly manner. Confused and ashamed she started up, though not without assistance; and her mask falling off, displayed the face of one of the first ladies of the Court, with a heightened colour, and eyes somewhat void of expression.

The Danish monarch himself, who was good humoured in his cups, instantly started up to console the overthrown lady; and calling loudly to the musicians, to begin an air which he named, he declared he would dance a measure with the Queen of Sheba. Unfortunately, however, he

did not well calculate his own powers, and in the very first effort, after reeling for a moment from side to side, he fell prone at her feet, well nigh bringing her to the ground along with him.

A scene of confusion ensued, such as is happily seldom witnessed at a Court; in the midst of which, the Eastern Queen very wisely effected her retreat, and his Danish Majesty was taken up by four stout ushers, and carried into a neighbouring bed-chamber, dripping with the jellies and syrups which his fair partner had so uncere- moniously bestowed upon his garments.

It is probable that the scene would have ended there, had not James, who never chose to be disappointed in his amusements, insisted upon the spectacle proceeding; and three ladies were introduced as Faith, Hope, and Charity, gorgeously dressed, though with no very light or heavenly vestments.

The farther proceedings of the masque we shall describe in the words of an eye witness, in order to win the reader's belief for things scarcely credible.

“ Hope,” says Sir John Harrington in his *Nugæ*, “ did essay to speak ; but wine rendered her endeavours so feeble, that she withdrew, and hoped the king would excuse her brevity. Faith was then alone, for I am certain she was not joined with good works, and left the court in a staggering condition. Charity came to the King’s feet, and seemed to cover the multitude of sins her sisters had committed. In some sort she made obeisance and brought gifts, but said she would return home again, as there was no gift which heaven has not already given his Majesty. She then returned to Faith and Hope who were both sick in the lower hall. Next came Victory in bright armour, and by a strange medley of versification, did endeavour to make suit to the King ; but Victory did not triumph long, for, after much lamentable utterance, she was led away like a silly captive, and laid to sleep in the outer steps of the antechamber. Now Peace did make her entry and strive to get foremost to the King ; but I grieve to tell how great wrath she did discover unto those of her attendants,

and much contrary to her semblance, most rudely made war with her olive branch, and laid on the pates of those who did oppose her coming."

Thus ended an exhibition, disgraceful to all concerned, and painful to those who witnessed it. To Arabella Stuart it had, as the reader may suppose, caused not a little grief and annoyance. She felt ashamed of her sex, of her class, of her society; and during the last act of this strange scene, she had turned her eyes away, suffering them to wander over the crowd of persons who lined the hall on either side and occupied a considerable space at the end.

In the meanwhile, Lord Rochester, who, though not constantly maintaining his position near her, always returned to it, had endeavoured more than once to engage her in conversation, but, to say truth, without much success. At last, however, he perceived that her voice, in answering some question he addressed to her, suddenly faltered, and her reply stopped abruptly.

"Is anything the matter, lady?" asked Sir Harry West, who saw her cheek turn deadly pale.

“ I am faint,” replied Arabella, “ —the heat, I think—”

“ Will you go out into the air?” asked the old Knight; but, at the same time, his eyes followed hers to a spot at the farther extremity of the hall, towards which they were turned, and an involuntary exclamation of “ Ha !” broke from his lips.

It was just at this moment, however, that the group representing Peace and Abundance, entered the hall; and the noise and confusion which prevailed, drew attention in another direction.

“ Would you like to retire?” again asked the old Knight.

“ No,” replied Arabella, “ no, I shall be better in a moment — this cannot last long. Would to Heaven it had never taken place !”

“ It is, indeed, a disgusting affair,” replied Sir Harry West. “ My Lord, I wonder if his Majesty would object to that window being opened, for the lady is faint with the heat, and the King himself looks over warm.”

“ Oh no,” exclaimed Lord Rochester, “ I will open it in a minute, and give Solomon some air.

Would your Majesty be pleased to let in a little of the breath of Heaven," he continued, moving to the King's chair, "for it seems, we have too much of the breath of earth here."

"Well flavoured with sack and canary," answered the King, "but we'll soon get out of the *hotter*. Don't you see, Peace and Plenty are retreating in confusion? and methinks, it will be wise to go out upon the terrace and refresh ourselves in the evening air. The moon is shining, is it not? Give me your arm, Carro. I-fegs, though our head be as strong as that of most folk, the good wine of my Lord of Salisbury is well nigh as much as we can carry."

The King and Queen then rose; and, according to the proposal of James, the whole party issued forth into the wide ornamented grounds—with one exception. Arabella Stuart, whispering to Anne of Denmark, that she was somewhat faint, but would rejoin her in a few minutes, darted away to her own room, where, casting herself on her knees beside her bed, she hid her face upon her hands, and prayed. Her prayers

were not unmingled with tears, however ; and when she rose, her eyes were red.

“They may see that I have been weeping,” she said to herself, “and I may as well put a mask upon my face, as upon my heart. There will be others in similar guise,” and taking up the rarely used black velvet mask which lay upon her dressing table, she hurried down by the small staircase, which led from her apartments, to rejoin the Queen on the terrace. At the foot of the stairs, close to the doorway by which she was going out, stood a tall and graceful figure leaning against the pillar. He drew a step back as she approached, with a cold and respectful air. But Arabella suddenly stopped, exclaiming, “Seymour ! Do you not know me ?” and she put up her hand to remove her mask.

“Nay, nay,” he said stopping her ; “I know you right well, sweet lady, — no mask can hide Arabella from William Seymour.”

“Then what is the matter ?” she asked in surprise ; “why did you not let me know that you were returned from exile ?”

“Better, perhaps, not have returned at all,” replied Seymour in a grave tone.

“Oh, Seymour!” exclaimed Arabella. But at that moment, a door on the other side of the passage opened, giving admission to some servants carrying plates and dishes from the banqueting room; and Arabella, fearful of being recognized, hurried forward and joined the Queen upon the terrace.

She found that almost every lady had resumed her mask, on the pretence, common in that day, of guarding her complexion from the air. The company had broken up into various groupings, and were scattered over the grounds in the moonlight, with the liberty which Anne of Denmark encouraged in the Court; and as soon as the Queen saw Arabella, she exclaimed, “Away, away, my pretty cousin! Find thee a mate for the evening. We have cast off Royal restraints, and for the next hour, are as free as the wind.”

Arabella looked round, but the mate whom her heart would have fondly sought for that hour, or for the whole of life, was not near; and, fixing hastily upon good Sir Harry West, she

advanced to the place where he stood, saying, "Come, my dear good friend, the Queen wills that I choose a partner for the evening's gossip, and so I will inflict myself on you."

"Alas, lady," replied the old knight, walking on by her side; "you might have chosen a younger and a gayer heart."

"A younger, but not a gayer," replied Arabella, in a cheerful tone; "for we will be as merry as skylarks together. What is there in the world worth being sad about?—When one has found out that love sooner or later waxes cold, that hope goes out at last like an exhausted lamp, that courtesy has its changes like every other fashion, that temperance and soberness can give up their place amongst the virtues to drunkenness and excess—what is there in the world sufficiently valuable, to make us give it a sigh when we see it passing away?"

"Right gloomy merriment, dear lady!" answered the Knight with a shake of the head; "but yet not of the sort that falls upon old age. The shade upon you, is but that cast by some passing cloud, not the grey twilight of declining

day.—What has happened? has your bird got out of the cage and flown away?”

“No,” replied Arabella quickly, “he has come back again and pecked my hand.—But here hurries Lord Rochester.—In pity leave me not.—Ha! who is that sweet lady joins him now, and hangs upon his arm?” she continued, speaking to herself. “Many thanks, fair dame!—many thanks for keeping him from me.—I pray thee hold him fast—and she does too! Who can that be, Sir Harry?”

“The Countess of Essex, I think,” answered the Knight.

“Oh no,” replied Arabella, “she had on a robe of amber and silver—that is dark blue or green, I think.”

“She has had time to change it,” said the Knight, “and she it certainly is. That queenly, yet impetuous step is not to be mistaken, nor that glorious form harbouring—what?”

“I know not,” replied Arabella, “we are but little acquainted.”

“Ay, who shall say?” rejoined Sir Harry West, “at eighteen, who shall say, whether it be angel

or devil? for the fallen Morning Star shone once as bright as the best in heaven."

"Fye, fye, Sir Harry!" cried Arabella, "I thought that beauty now-a-days was the great good, the pledge and warrant of celestial excellence—who ever speaks of aught but beauty? If a lover would please me, he fixes on my fine points, as a jockey describing his horse. My eyes are certain to put out the stars. It is my lip that makes the roses blush with envy. Pearls have quite lost their price since my teeth came to court; and sculptors are quite ruined in alabaster, trying to imitate my skin. Fye, fye, Sir Harry! If she be beautiful, she must be an angel."

"She has not made her husband think so," replied Sir Harry West. "But here comes another to join us—my young friend William Seymour. Will you fly from him, too, lady; or shall I leave you to his care?"

"Nay, stay," cried Arabella eagerly—too eagerly; "stay, I beseech you."

Was it her heart spoke? Yes; reader, or ra-

ther the agitation that was in it. She feared herself at that moment—she feared to be left alone with him she loved the best, at a time when her thoughts were all in confusion, when her bosom was full of emotion, lest she should say or do something rashly that could never be recalled. In another instant, however, Seymour was by her side ; but he, too, was agitated ; and though she had hidden, under her gay speeches to Sir Harry West, the struggling sensation within her, she could do so no longer, with her lover by her side. Thus the few sentences first spoken on both parts were incoherent,—almost unintelligible.

The old knight came to their aid, however, asking his young friend, in a quiet conversational tone, when he had returned.

“ But yesterday,” replied William Seymour. “ One fortnight ago, I received the King’s permission to come back ; and, setting off next morning, I have since ridden post through France and part of Italy, taking not much time, as you may suppose, to admire the beauties of the road.”

“ No, good faith, my young friend,” replied

Sir Harry West, "nor to give yourself much repose either."

"True," answered Seymour with a sigh; "I sought no repose, I was winged with hope and expectation, going back to my native land, to all I loved the best, in the full confidence of finding hearts unchanged and affections the same. But it was a boy-like error, Sir Harry. The first rumour that met me, showed, that time as well as fortune, changes favour; and all that I have seen this night, makes me think that everything on earth is, as the Jewish King has said, lighter than vanity."

"Something like your own complaint, sweet lady," said Sir Harry West; "a moment ago you were painting the world in the same gloomy colours."

"I said," replied Arabella, "that there is nothing on earth worth sighing for; and in truth I think so still; for the events we long for most eagerly, generally end in disappointment or anguish."

"Well, then, you are both agreed it seems,"

said Sir Harry West; "'tis strange that you should come to the same conclusion on the same night."

"Sir Harry, Sir Harry," cried a voice from the terrace above; "His Majesty wishes to speak with you. You must give judgment between him and the Ambassador from Florence, on a passage in Dante, which his excellency pretends he can translate into English better than His Majesty."

"Now Heaven defend me!" exclaimed the old Knight. "Would that the Moon had not lighted them to look for me. But I must leave the lady under your charge, Seymour," and away he sped, while Arabella stood hesitating for a moment, whether to accompany him or not.

But woman's heart is always willing to leave a door open for reconciliation, and though she said, "I think we had better follow to the terrace," she took no step that way.

"As you please, lady," replied Seymour without moving in that direction.

Arabella turned round to go; but love conquered, and pausing suddenly, she said "No!—

The opportunity may never come again, and it shall not be said, that I resented the first unkindness of a rash man. We will go the other way."

"Unkindness, Arabella!" cried Seymour, "'tis not I am unkind."

"Then you would say, it is I?" exclaimed Arabella.

"Nay," replied Seymour in a sad tone; "I do not say so. I have no title to charge you with unkindness. What right have I to expect that you should remember me, through several long years; that you should neglect happier men with fairer fortunes, for the sake of one whom you once condescended—may I say it now-a-days?—to love."

"What right?" said Arabella. "Oh, Seymour, do you ask me what right?—I might as well inquire of my own heart, what right I have to feel this anguish when I see him to whom all my thoughts have been given for years, for whose return I have looked with anxious hope and longing, till delay did, indeed, make the heart sick, come back at length, cold and indifferent as

if we had scarcely ever met. But I make no such foolish inquiries. I have a right, the right of true affection, the right of pledged and plighted faith, the right, if you will, of sorrow and suffering, and by that right, I ask you, William Seymour, what is it that has changed you thus?"

"Nay, Arabella," he replied, "'tis not I am changed, 'tis you."

"Hush," she said, "here are people coming near," but the other group passed without noticing them, and she then added, "I will be coarse with you, Seymour, and speak boldly, what no man I think would dare to say, that you tell a falsehood.—I am not changed."

"Oh, prove it to me," cried Seymour, "and I will say it is the sweetest insult ever I received. Is it not true, then, that you encourage this minion of the King, this raw untutored Scot, whose woman face and glittering apparel has turned all heads it seems, and perverted all hearts."

"I," exclaimed Arabella, "I encourage him? Is it possible that that mad-headed passion jealousy should so far take possession of a sober-minded man, as to make him forget everything

he has known of one whose heart he once pretended to think the most valuable thing he could possess on earth. Oh, if that heart could be so hollow and so false, what an empty valueless gewgaw it would be! Come, I forgive thee, Seymour; if the yellow fiend has got thee in his hands, he has tormented thee too much already for me to add one punishment more. But I will have full confession by whom, by what, where, and how, came this outrageous fancy in thy head, my friend?"

"That is told at once," exclaimed her lover, "I heard it last night in London, from my brother.—I saw the man this night beside you with my eyes."

"Ay," replied the lady, "and might have seen too—if you had used them well,—poor Arabella nearly fainting when she caught the face of an ungrateful man gazing at her from the far end of the hall.—I will not tell you it was with joy,—it might be with fear, you know.—Your wife, your pledged and plighted wife, might well tremble, and turn pale, and nearly sink upon the ground, when you detected her listening to sweet words

from the King's fluttering favourite.—Think so, Seymour, think so, if you can !—But hark ! here are steps coming,—Sir Harry West—we must break off.”

“ But how, tell me how,” cried Seymour, “ I can see you again, how write to you ? ”

“ See me,” replied Arabella hastily, “ I know not, chance and fortune must favour us,—but as to writing, you may trust Ida Mara with anything.”

“ Ida Mara !—who is she ? ” asked her lover.

“ One of my gentlewomen,” replied Arabella in a gay tone, “ the only one, indeed, except two little maids that wait on her and me. But here is Sir Harry West,” she continued, turning towards the old knight as he approached, “ he will tell you more about her, for on my truth I think the girl is in love with him, and he with her. Is it not so, Sir Harry ? We speak of Ida Mara.”

Good Sir Harry West made no denial of the fact, but told the lady that the Queen was about to retire ; and Arabella followed him towards the terrace, but as she went she took care that Sey-

mour should have so full a description of the fair Italian, that he could find no difficulty in distinguishing her from the other attendants at the Court. Walking by her side, he crossed the terrace with her towards the Queen, but took his leave before she joined the royal circle, and was soon lost to her sight amongst the various groupes that were scattered over the ground.

The Court and the courtiers, still for several hours prolonged their revels in the halls of Theobalds; and cups of wine were drunk, and scenes of folly enacted, which I will not pause to enumerate or describe. Laughter, and song, and gaming, and many a vice, and many an absurdity, had there to take place before morning; but for Arabella Stuart, the day ended with the walk in the gardens.

CHAPTER VII.

THE reader does not require to be informed that the aspect of London in those days was very different from that which it shows at present. The great fire had not yet swept away that foul nest of narrow streets and tall houses, in which the plague lingered, almost as pertinaciously as in the lanes of an Oriental city; nor had the increasing population yet spread itself over the fields, or swallowed up the villages, by which the great metropolis of England was surrounded in former times, but which have been gradually covered with the mansions of succeeding races of the fashionable world, and fringed by the snug villas of commercial men, till the town is so gradually blended with the country, that it is scarcely possible to say where the one ends and the other begins.

Those large squares which have retained, in some instances, to the present day, the name of fields, were then fields indeed. Boys and girls went a Maying where balls and suppers are now held ; and within about a quarter of a mile of Lincoln's Inn, a small, tall-chimneyed house, four stories high on one side, and two on another, with a round tower of brick work, added to contain the stair-case, which seemed to have been forgotten in the original construction, rose in the midst of a garden ; very near the spot where gentlemen in curious wigs and black gowns now hurry about to plead the cause of the rich, but not in general of the poor, if they can help it.

At the garden gate of this house, in the beginning of August, a coach stopped one day about three of the clock, and two ladies with the usual masks on their faces descended, and walked with a quick pace towards the door in the round tower. Before they reached it, however, that door was opened by the small page whom we have seen accompanying Master Weston, otherwise Doctor Foreman, and who, when at home, had the office, which he performed most acutely,

of looking through a small loophole in the tower, to examine strictly all the personages who approached the Doctor's house.

Without any question, the two ladies walked straight up stairs, and, tapping at the door on the second floor, were answered by a voice from within which bade them enter. The shorter and stouter immediately lifted the latch and then drew back to suffer her taller and more graceful companion to pass. The other lady did so, and advancing straight to the table, touched the worthy Doctor Foreman on the shoulder, without, however, prevailing upon him to raise his head from some strange and extraordinary figures, which he was tracing with a pen upon a slip of parchment. His gay and glittering attire, as a foreign cavalier, had now been cast aside ; and he was robed in a black gown, trimmed with fur, having a small velvet cap upon his head. So profoundly busy did he seem, that all he replied, when the Countess of Essex touched him was, " Enter,—enter, why do you not come in ? "

" The man 's mad," cried the Countess.

" No no," replied Mrs. Turner, " does not

your Ladyship see that he is abstracted ? You must let him finish what he is about, your own fate may depend upon it for aught you know."

With this warning the Countess stood silent ; but her impatient spirit still moved her to keep beating the ground with her small foot, till at length Doctor Foreman exclaimed, as he drew two more new figures at the bottom of the vellum, " Gimmel, Alsaneth ;" and then looked round, as if in surprise, to see any one in the room but himself. As soon as he perceived—or appeared to perceive—the Countess, he started up exclaiming, " Bless me, beautiful lady ! I beg your ladyship's pardon. Pray be seated. What is the news with you ? 'Tis long since I have had the honour of seeing you. Has all gone according to your wish ? "

" Good faith, no : much to the contrary ;" replied the Countess seating herself, and taking off her mask ;—and here it is to be remarked that a great change had come over her, in her demeanour to the respectable Doctor Foreman, since first she was introduced to that worthy and scientific person. She had now seen him several

times: all shame and reserve had been cast off: her criminal love and its object were fully avowed; and, entangled in the snares of the impostor and his unprincipled associate, she was ready to engage in any rash act, however disgraceful, to accomplish her dark and vicious purposes. Nor let the reader for one moment doubt the truth of these assertions; let him not, filled with the notions and enlightened by the knowledge of the present day, ask himself if it be possible that a lady, of the highest rank and education of the time, could be the dupe of such a charlatan and so low and infamous a woman? Let him not suppose that the tale is invented or embellished by the writer; for it is absolutely true, and stands based upon the evidence given before a Court of Justice. There may be indeed particulars, still more gross than any here detailed, views still more wicked, follies still more flagrant—for much must be suppressed that would offend a pure and delicate mind—but let it be remembered, that all these scenes, are rather undercoloured than overcharged.

“I thought at one time indeed,” continued

the Countess, "that your art was having its effect, for I met him at Theobald's, and, for the first time, saw something like the light of love in his eyes. But all has gone wrong since I returned to London. My father insists that I shall go home to that hateful wretch, to whom I am tied by such cruel bonds; and, if I do so, I shall die of grief and despair."

"Madam," said the Doctor, "I grieve for you deeply, but it is not in my power to control destiny. All that I told you was, that by the use of certain powders and drugs, such as William Shakespeare speaks of in the *Midsummer Nights Dream*, where he says,—

The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid,
Will make a man or woman madly doat
Upon the next live creature that it sees ;

I can change hate or indifference into love, and love into hate, so that he who now cares nought for you, may soon be at your feet, and he who now loves you, may soon be as cold as ice."

"Then give me some, give me some of the latter," she cried eagerly. "that I may mix it

with all the food of this half-husband of mine, that he may learn to detest me, as I detest him. Would he but consent, the iron bond between us might soon be broken ; but I cannot take the ways that other women would, to win my purpose. If I persuade, and soothe, it will but waken his love the more."

"No, no," said Foreman, "you must not do that! — You must repel him coldly — show your dislike—look as if you loathed his sight."

"That were no great effort," cried the Countess, "it is my daily food to hate him, — But hark ! there is a noise. Look out, Turner, look out."

"Half-a-dozen gentlemen, as I live," exclaimed Mrs. Turner, "coming straight along the path towards the house too,—I do believe they are gentlemen of my Lord of Suffolk, your noble father, lady.—Yes, there is Sir John Walters as, I live ! Have you no hiding place, Doctor ?"

"'Twere useless, 'twere useless," answered the Countess with a look of disdain, "the coach is at the gate ; and I am not a baby, to be frightened at the look of my father's gentlemen. Come

quick, sirrah, give me some of that powder of hate you talk of."

"We weigh it, madam," said Foreman hesitating, "at the rate of one gold noble per grain, but a small portion goes a great way."

"There, give me plenty," she cried throwing a purse upon the table; and Foreman, taking it up, hurried to a little cabinet at the side, and took out several small packets.

At the same instant the impostor's boy knocked at the door of the room; and the Countess exclaimed boldly, "Come in."

"There be six gentlemen at the door," he said, "inquiring if the Countess of Essex be here."

"Tell them she is," replied the Countess, "and if they want her, they must wait her pleasure below.—Come, sir, is that ready?"

"It is, madam," said the Doctor giving her the powders.

"Ha!" exclaimed she, gazing at them with a triumphant smile, "if these will make him hate me, he shall soon have them all, though it drove him well nigh to murder me. Oh! if I could

but make him strike me ! Now sir, to you I must leave the task of working upon Lord Rochester ; he is now in London, and you can easily find means,—”

“ Fear not, madam, fear not,” replied the impostor, who heard a heavy step upon the stairs, and, to say the truth, was anxious to get rid of his fair guest, for fear of inquiries not the most profitable to him, “ Fear not, madam, I will so manage it that,—”

“ The gentlemen will come up !” cried the boy thrusting in his head. The moment after he was pushed aside ; and a stout middle aged man entered, on whom the bright eyes of the Countess flashed living fire.

“ How dare you, Sir John Walters,” she exclaimed, “ intrude upon me in this manner ? ”

“ I have your father’s orders, my lady,” replied Sir John, “ to bring you to him directly. He has something of importance to communicate.”

“ Well, sir,” said the Countess, “ I suppose I must obey ; but be you sure that I will soon break through this tutelage ;” and passing him

with a look of angry disdain, she descended the stairs, walked through the midst of the gentlemen at the door, without noticing any of them, and entered her coach.

The vehicle was driven immediately to the house of the Earl of Suffolk; and an angry spot was still upon the cheek of the fair Countess when she entered her father's gates. Fear and timidity were not in her nature; and she walked at once to the room where she expected to find him. She was surprised, however, and somewhat dismayed, it must be confessed, not only to behold her two parents, but her sister and the Earl of Essex. Her mother was in tears, and her father's brow stern and dark, while her husband stood with his arms folded on his chest, looking sad, rather than out of temper.

Passing him by, without the slightest notice, Lady Essex advanced straight towards her father, saying, "You sent for me, sir."

"I did, Frances," he replied; "it was to let you know my will. Here stands your husband, madam, to whose house you have refused to go, on one pretence or another, ever since he returned

to England to claim you as his bride. I beseech you, my child, in courteous decency, to give your hand to this noble gentleman, and let him lead you home ;—for this is your home no longer.”

“ I dare say, my lord,” replied the Countess unabashed, “ that I could find another without troubling him.”

“ You see,” cried her father,—“ bear witness all, that no remonstrance or parental solicitation has any effect ! Now, madam, hear ! The coach, which is to convey you with your husband to his seat of Chartley, is at the door : your wardrobe is packed up to follow. From this room you go to that conveyance.—Nay, not a word ; for if you walk not soberly, you shall be compelled ; and down to Chartley with what grace you may. I trust that ere I see your face again, a change will be wrought in your heart, and that I shall be enabled to welcome back the daughter gladly, whom I now part with in displeasure.”

Lady Essex made a great effort to speak ; but it was in vain ; and she burst into a passionate flood of tears.

“Come, lady,” said Lord Essex in a gentle tone, taking her hand, “believe me, I will do all that man can do to win your love, and to secure your happiness.”

“You can do neither, sir!” replied the Countess; “but I am your slave it seems. Have you no chains ready? Let us go!” and without bidding adieu to any one, she walked straight to the door.

We will pass over the journey to Chartley, the cold hatred with which she repelled her husband’s love by the way, and the first week of their sojourn at that beautiful seat.

It was on the evening of a bright day in the same month, while the whole world was looking gay and cheerful without, that the Earl entered his wife’s drawing-room, where all was dark and gloomy. The windows were closed, the curtains drawn; for she had never suffered them to be opened since her arrival. A single lamp stood upon the table; and by its faint light, the Countess sat and wept. She raised neither her head nor her eyes, when the step of her husband sounded in the chamber, but continued

fixed and motionless, like a beautiful statue representing angry grief. Lord Essex drew a seat to the other side of the table and sitting down, gazed at her for a moment or two in silence.

“Dry your tears, madam,” he said at length.

“That is at least a privilege you cannot take from me, sir,” she replied. “When in my childhood, now six years ago, I took a vow I did not understand, I never promised not to weep.”

“Dry your tears, I say, madam !” he rejoined in a tone, both of sternness and sadness ; “for the cause of their flowing, is about to be removed.”

The Countess started and looked up.

“I will claim your attention for a moment,” he continued ; “and you shall hear the result of some consideration. You and I were married at an early age, as the custom is—”

“It is a bad one,” said the Countess. “Go on.”

“But if you were not capable,” continued her husband, “of loving and esteeming at that age, I was ; and I returned to England to claim

you, full of affection, which, as you may suppose, was not diminished when I saw your beauty. I have now been here nearly two months; and I have tried, by every means within man's power, to win you to return the attachment I have felt. The effort has proved vain. I have learned to know that you are unworthy of my love; that instead of that fair form containing a heart and mind as soft and beautiful as your looks, there is nothing within but a proud, angry spirit, selfish, and cold, and fierce;—a loathsome thing that makes the glittering casket in which it is enshrined, all poor and valueless. I therefore cast you off, madam; or, as you will term it, set you free to go whithersoever you will, to do whatsoever you please. Your uncle of Northampton will receive you, for my good Lord, your father, will not. From me you shall enjoy such an income as may befit the Countess of Essex. I give it in honour of my own name, and trust, but faintly, that you will never disgrace it. Tomorrow, at daybreak, your equipage will be at the door to convey you back to London. You came down hither with me against your will;

but, if I were to go back again with you, it would be against my own."

"Oh joy, joy!" cried the Countess, starting up and clasping her hands. "I am a slave no longer!"

Her husband gave her one look of scorn and reprobation, and quitted the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHAKESPEARE assured his hearers in the age of which we are now writing, "the course of true love never did run smooth," and the assertion is certainly as true as a proverb. When Arabella Stuart retired to her chamber for the night, her heart was relieved of part of the load which her lover's apparently strange conduct had brought upon it; yet sufficient anxiety and grief remained in her mind to give her ample subject for thought and sorrowful meditation. She was still a little angry, it must be confessed, that Seymour should even have doubted her—her, whose whole thoughts and affections had been with him during his absence. But yet, perhaps, there might be a certain sort of gratification too, in her bosom, to see that his love for her still remained so powerful, that the least apprehen-

sion of losing her, should change his whole nature, and render one, so uniformly kind, tender, and ardent,—cold, discourteous, and repulsive. It was a little triumph of its sort, which even Arabella's heart could not but be pleased with.

Hers, however, was not a character either to retain such anger, or enjoy such triumph long; and the whole was soon swallowed up in joy at his return, and grief for the uneasiness he had suffered. The more painful part of her contemplations referred to the rumours which he had heard; and she asked herself with fear,—what if the King should have given encouragement to his favourite to pursue the suit for her hand?—what would be her fate if James, won to the views of Rochester, should insist upon her accepting him as her husband? How could such rumours get abroad, she inquired likewise, unless some much more marked approbation of Rochester's ambition, than any of her own acts had given, had been received from a quarter where will and authority went together?

Women, however, have generally a happy art of putting aside the consideration of painful

probabilities. They have much greater faith in the influence of time and accident in removing obstacles and averting dangers than men; and Arabella consoled herself with the hope of seeing William Seymour on the following morning, and enjoying an interview, however short, during which all clouds would be swept away, and their whole hearts opened to each other as before.

Such expectations were strengthened ere she retired to rest. Ida Mara, who had not been in her chamber when she first returned, appeared not long after, while one of the maids was combing their lady's beautiful long hair, and standing beside her, as was her wont when she was at her toilet, talked gaily of all the pageants which Lord Salisbury's mansion had presented during the day, and described the hall, through which she had just passed, as displaying a lamentable, yet ludicrous scene of drunkenness and folly.

When the lady was undressed, she told her attendants to leave her as usual to her prayers; but the pretty Italian girl begged leave to remain a moment, saying that she had something to tell her mistress, and the moment the

two maids were gone, she took a note from her bosom, and put it into Arabella's hand.

"Dear lady," she cried at the same time, "do you know that the gentleman who with Sir Lewis Lewkenor escorted you to Wilton, long, long ago, has come back again? I found him standing at the bottom of the stairs just now; and, the moment he saw me, he asked if my name was not Ida Mara, and then gave me that note with directions to deliver it when you were alone. Oh, you will be so glad to see him!"

"How know you that, Ida Mara?" exclaimed Arabella with a smile.

"Because you wept when he went away," replied the girl archly, "and have sighed ever since, when I talked to you of Italy."

"Well, Ida Mara," answered her mistress, "you must tell no one that I wept when he went away, for it might be dangerous to him and to me."

"Then I would die first," cried the girl; and Arabella, opening the note, read a few hasty lines from William Seymour, beseeching her to walk early in the park on the following morning,

before the rest of the Court was stirring. "I have a thousand things to say," continued Seymour, "a thousand things to tell, a thousand things to ask forgiveness for."

Arabella's heart fluttered; for, although she had no hesitation, though she looked upon herself as bound to him by every tie, and believed that she had no right to refuse any reasonable request, yet there was something in the idea of purposely going out to meet him, which agitated, if it did not alarm her.

Telling Ida Mara to wake her early, she retired to rest; but little sleep did poor Arabella gain that night, and by daybreak on the following morning she was up and at her toilet. Scarcely had she commenced, however, when Ida Mara entered, informing her that the whole Court was on foot, the King having been ill in the night, and about to set out immediately for London.

The lady finished dressing herself in haste, and, descending the stairs, went out by the small postern door opening upon the terrace. Leaving that exposed spot as soon as she could, she pro-

ceeded by a flight of steps into the gardens below, and thence by a long straight walk towards a long avenue, which, though now long cut down, was in those days one of the greatest ornaments of the place. A step behind her, soon caught her ear; and the next instant Seymour was by her side. But she had only time to learn that, there being no room in the house, he was lodged in one of the villages near, and, to tell him that all were in the hurry of departure at the Court, when two Scotch gentlemen, named Ramsay and Morton, appeared in the avenue, and Arabella exclaimed eagerly, "We must part, Seymour, for the present. Call often at Shrewsbury House; for if I have anything to tell, I will leave a letter there for you.—My aunt is all kindness, and in part knows what is between us."

"Then I can communicate with you, there," cried Seymour.

"Yes, yes," replied Arabella, "farewell, farewell," and she left him.

Had they been wise and practised in such meetings, instead of parting and each turning back by a separate path—a proceeding which

might plainly indicate to any who watched them, that they had come thither by agreement and returned as soon as they had said what they wished to communicate — William Seymour would have walked on towards the house, and Arabella would have pursued her ramble, leaving those who saw them to suppose that they had met accidentally.

They did not follow this plan, however, and their meeting was accordingly marked and reported afterwards; for there was nothing in which James found greater delight, than in learning all the secrets, and investigating the private affairs of those by whom he was surrounded; and his courtiers took ample care to feed his appetite for this sort of information, with all the gossip of the Court.

From Theobalds to London, and from London to Hampton Court, Arabella accompanied the Queen, with the interval of but one day; and during the whole of the following week, she had no opportunity of seeing her lover; for, without any apparent cause, events always took such a turn as to prevent her from visiting Lon-

don, even for an hour, as she had proposed. She knew not how or why, but it seemed to her that she was watched; nay, more, that her actions were overruled without any apparent stretch of authority. Wherever she proposed to go during the day, a message from the Queen called her in another direction; and if she walked out alone, she was sure to see some one at a distance, walking step by step within view.

She tried to persuade herself that all this was accidental, and that it was but the consciousness of her own wishes which made her suspect other people had remarked them. But she was not allowed to remain long in such a belief; for one morning, before she joined the Queen, Ida Mara came into her chamber with her cheek glowing, and her bright eyes full of light; and, sinking down on her knees beside her mistress, she cried; "Oh, lady, lady dear, they wish me to betray you—to be a spy upon you. That Sir Lewis Lewkenor sent for me this morning, and commanded me, in the name of the King, to give him information daily of all that you do."

Arabella turned somewhat pale ;—" And what did you say, Ida Mara ?" she asked.

" I said at first, like a fool," replied the girl, " that I was your servant, and not the King's. But I was sorry for it afterwards ; for I thought that if I showed them that they would get no tidings from me, they might apply to some one else ; so then I said as quietly as I could, that I knew not there was anything to tell."

" What answered he to that ?" demanded Arabella.

" Why he asked," replied the girl, " if Mr. Seymour had been to visit you since he returned. I said boldly, no, as well I might ; and he then repeated that I must bring him intelligence every day ; and, having by this time be-thought myself of what was best to do, I made him a low courtesy, saying, that I trusted if I were to have such an office, I should have some wages for it, otherwise, I could not undertake it. He replied that I should be well paid ; and I answered, that it must not be like the officers of State who get their money when, and how they

can : that I was too poor to wait. Whereupon, he gave me a rose noble, which I have got here."

Arabella shook her head. "I fear, Ida Mara," she said, "by taking the man's money, you have committed yourself to give him information."

"Oh, he shall have it, he shall have it," cried Ida Mara, "as much as he can desire. He shall know every gown you have put on, and how many times you change your shoes, and what you say to your tailor, when he brings home your new suit. There shall not be a trifle of such a kind that he shall not know."

"But if he questions you of other things?" asked Arabella.

"Oh, leave me to answer him, dear lady," cried the girl, "and be you assured, that not one thing which you would keep secret, shall he ever discover from my lips. I will guard yours better than my own ; and, as he talks to me in villanous Italian, I shall have no difficulty in leading his wit astray. But hark ! there is some one knocks at the door."

"See who it is," replied Arabella in some agitation ; "it is terrible to be thus spied upon."

Ida Mara rose and went to the door of the chamber, which was in a deep recess, leading from one of the towers, in which the room was situated, to the main body of the building. The Italian girl opened the door, and looked out upon the stairs, when drawing back for a moment, she turned an inquiring glance towards her mistress, to which Arabella could make no reply, as she knew not who was there.

The girl then, acting upon her own judgment, opened the door wide, without uttering a word; and with a light step, William Seymour entered the room, Ida Mara quitting it at the same moment.

Arabella rose and sprang towards him; but before he could hold her to his heart for a moment, she exclaimed, "Seymour, dear Seymour, you must not stay.—Nay, not an instant! We are watched: suspicion is roused; and we may be both ruined if you remain.—I can bear this no longer. I will find means to quit the Court within a few days. In the meanwhile, I will write to you, and tell you all that has happened. But now, you must leave me. Indeed, indeed,

you must!—Nay, surely you have no jealousy of Arabella, now?”

“None, none, dearest,” he cried, “but all I fear is that they may persecute you to wed this man.”

“They would not succeed,” answered Arabella; “besides, he seems to have quitted the pursuit. I have seen nothing of him since we were here. We have not exchanged a word for the last week.—But leave me, Seymour, leave me, in pity.—You may frustrate your own hopes.”

“I must at least give you this letter from my Lord of Shrewsbury,” said Seymour. “Hearing that I was coming hither, he charged me with it, but I know not what it contains.”

“Well, well, I will read it afterwards,” answered the lady. “Now, Seymour, now, you must go; but as you have been seen here, you had better present yourself at the Court.”

“I will,” he answered, “I will. Adieu then, dearest, if it must be so;” and he left her.

Scarcely had he quitted the room, however, when some one again knocked at the door, and, without much ceremony, entered, before the lady had broken the seal of her uncle's letter. She was not a little surprised, as she looked up, to see one of the keepers of the Council Chamber, who advanced towards her with a low bow.

"What would you with me, sir?" she asked.

"The King, madam," he replied, "requires your ladyship's presence before the Council."

Arabella turned pale; but there was no means of avoiding whatever was before her; and she replied at once, "I am ready to accompany you, sir. Pray call my gentle-woman, from that room on the left."

The keeper obeyed; and Arabella, after covering her head with a veil, put her arm through that of Ida Mara, and followed the keeper to the Royal apartments.

In the anteroom to the council-chamber, her guide asked her to wait for a moment, and opening the door went in. As he did so, she heard

her lover's voice, answering aloud, " I carried her a letter from the Earl of Shrewsbury, your Majesty."

The next moment the keeper again appeared, and ushered her into the presence of the King. James was seated at the head of the table, with a black velvet hat looped with a large emerald on his head, and three or four noblemen bare headed on his right hand and on his left. The moment he beheld Arabella, he said, with the broad Scottish accent which he never lost, " Put the lady a chair, sirrah.—Now, young gentleman, answer me again, and mind that you tell me the truth, for there were eyes upon you, sir,—there were eyes upon you. How long did you stay upon this visit ? "

" I have no desire, your Majesty," replied Seymour, with some haughtiness in his tone, " to speak aught but the truth ; it is not my custom. I might have stayed with the Lady Arabella some two minutes and a half, or three minutes."

" The man says five, sir," cried the King.

" About five, your Majesty," said one of the councillors, " he is not precise."

“It may have been five, sire,” answered Seymour, slightly smiling; “pleasant society makes the time pass quick, and unpleasant things will make it seem tardy—Methinks I have been here an hour.”

“As bold as ever I see,” cried the King; “you will make yourself a hot nest of it, sir, if you go on at this rate. When did you visit the Lady Arabella before?”

“Some years ago, sir,” replied William Seymour, “and then by your Majesty’s command.”

“Do you mean to say, sir,” asked the King, “that you have not seen her since you had our gracious permission to return?”

“Seen her I have, your Majesty,” replied Seymour, “at Theobald’s the night of the masque; and on the following morning I met her as she was walking in the park. She is herself witness, however, that I did not then detain her long; and I protest, upon my honour, that I have never visited her since my return, except on this one occasion, when I carried her the letter of my Lord Shrewsbury. Then I stayed not longer than any gentleman might be expected to do in

common courtesy—not knowing,” he added bitterly, “that there was a spy at my heels,” and he went on in a murmur to himself, “I would have cut off his ears, if I had.”

“Sir, you speak rashly and unadvisedly,” replied the King: “spies are necessary in all civilized states, and not to be light-lied by such gallants as you. It is in some sort, sir, an holy ordinance. Did not Joshua the prophet send out spies, who were received by that excellent woman Rahab, the harlot, who let them down secretly from the wall? and it is right that Kings and Judges should be informed, by discreet and dutiful subjects, of all that is taking place around them, especially in what concerns their near relations, sirrah. You hear, madam, what this gentleman says; and I charge you upon your allegiance to tell me if it be true?”

“Perfectly, sire,” said Arabella in a low voice “as far as I have heard it.—He brought me a letter from my uncle of Shrewsbury.”

“Ay, is it even so?” cried the King: “you both sing the same song; but I would fain see this letter.”

Arabella hesitated. She knew not what her uncle might have said. Besides the risk of his alluding to the messenger in such a way as might excite suspicion, there was many a jest current upon the manners of the Court which might not be very well fitted for the King's eye ; and holding the letter in her hand, she replied, " This was not written, sir, to be made public. I should think the letter of an uncle to his niece might be,—"

" Hout, nonsense ! " cried James. " Is not a King God's Vicegerent upon Earth, and above all uncles or fathers either ? Is he not Pater Patriæ ? I command you, madam, lay the letter on the board."

Arabella did so with a trembling hand ; and one of the councillors handed it to the King, who took it and examined it closely.

" It cannot have been falsified," he said, " for the seal is not broken."

He then without ceremony opened it, and read aloud, making his usual comments as he did so.

" ' My sweet niece,' " it proceeded, " ' your good aunt and I are about soon to go to our place called Malvoisy, in Buckinghamshire ; and we

would fain have you with us, if you can get the King's permission to come, not so much for our own sakes, to have the company of an idle girl, whom we do not love, as for yours, to get you out of the foul and unsavoury atmosphere of a Court, where, from all we hear, you are likely to be quite corrupted by bad example.'

"Heard you ever the like of that?" cried the King, laughing till the tears ran over his cheeks.

"'I do not know,'" he proceeded, reading Lord Shrewsbury's letter, "'whether you, too, my niece were as drunk as the rest at Theobald's. I hope not, for if you were, your head must have ached the next morning; but I do hear that his Majesty of Denmark emptied two pottles and a half of heavy Burgundy after the repast, and our great King the same.'

"The false loon," cried the King with a tremendous oath, "I declare, he's like a dishonest tapster, and put down three gills too much to my score. But we will see farther," and he went on to read,—"'and our great King the same. But happily for the State, his brains are too good to swim with any quantity of wine;

and so he 'scaped falling, though I hear, in the contest, Burgundy overthrew Denmark. However, if you would come with us, and live in quiet for a time, seeing none but your Aunt and me, wheedle his Majesty, as you know how, and join us here to-morrow or the next day. I shall send this by Sir John Harrington—that merry soul. Yours, as you shall behave yourself,

‘SHREWSBURY.

“ ‘Postscriptum. William Seymour has just come in ; and he goes down to Hampton Court to-morrow ;— I give him charge of this letter.’ ”

“ Ha !” cried the King, “ by my soul, though he puts his fingers somewhat too near Majesty, he knows how to do so with distinctions, this good Earl of Shrewsbury ; and a wise and sapient man he is, if he had but a little knowledge of the Greek tongue, in respect of which he is illiterate, as I once proved. But of that more hereafter. I cannot but say, lady, that it might be as well for you to accept your uncle’s invitation.”

“ I shall do so most willingly, your Majesty,” replied Arabella, “ and the more from the per-

fect solitude he promises me. The Court has been so thronged of late, that I feel as if I had been living in a crowd, and shall be glad to see the air thinner of human beings."

"Well, so shall it be then," said James, "and you shall have our full leave and royal permission to spend a fortnight, or perchance a month with your good uncle at his manor at Malvoisy. But before either of you depart, remember for the future, that we will have no love passages.—Ay, madam, you may redden, but we may know more than perhaps we choose to say. We have our own views with regard to the disposal of your hand, which shall be announced to you in due time; and we shall expect to find you duly obedient, and complying. You sir, too, will understand us, and if you proceed farther with any follies you may have gotten into your head, you will incur our heavy displeasure, which is not a light matter for any man to bear. So be wise, if wisdom can enter into so young a pate. Now you may retire, sir."

Seymour bowed and withdrew; and, to say the truth, had not the matter so much affected his

happiness, he might have inclined to laugh at the reprimand of the King. James's broad Scottish accent, which sounded uncouth enough in his moments of uproarious jocularity, became even more ludicrous when delivering any of his solemn harangues, especially as he had an inveterate habit of interlarding, even his most studied sentences, with the peculiar idioms and phraseology of his own nation, and with illustrations often the most homely and absurd, and often the most profane, not to say blasphemous. To these we cannot attempt to do justice; but it is well known, that the sudden utterance of such words and figures, in the midst of an oration delivered with mock majesty and solemnity, has overset the gravity even of an indignant House of Commons, and caused the members to shrink behind each other, lest their laughter should be too apparent.

Arabella remained before the council, in anxious expectation of what was to come next; but much to her gratification, as the King was commencing a long admonition, he was drawn away by some word which he himself made use of—we

believe it was *callant*—to enter into a tedious discussion upon the derivation thereof, which occupied him for the space of nearly twenty minutes, at the end of which time, he dismissed her without returning to the original subject.

Retiring gladly to her own chamber, the lady gave way to the feelings she had feared to display before the eyes of the heartless monarch and his cold councillors. The storm had passed away for the time; but it left clouds behind it; and though she felt relieved, there was enough of agitation and apprehension remaining to bring the tears into her eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

As with the ancient walls of palaces and halls, as with the dungeon and the Court of Law, so with the old hawthorn tree of the wide chase, the yew tree of the churchyard, or the broad oak of the park:—many a tale could be told by the silent witnesses of man's passions, joys, and sufferings, had they but a voice to speak that which they have seen: and how instructive might the homily be, if, as we have reason to believe, vice seldom goes without its punishment on earth, though virtue may have to look to Heaven for its reward!

In the wildest part of that tract of ground, called Bushy Park, which, in the days we speak of, showed far less trace of man's handy work than at present, amidst fern, and whitethorn, and starting deer, walked along, a lady and gentle-

man, both exquisitely beautiful in person, whatever they might be in heart. With her two fair hands clasped together, she hung upon his arm, gazing up through her mask at his face, while he looked down at her with admiration of a kind to which it would be almost profane to give the name of love.

“Nay,” she said in a laughing tone, “I did not send it. You do not suppose, that I need to court any man.”

“Nay, sweetest lady,” replied Rochester, “I do not suppose you do ; but I thought that fortune and yourself might have so favoured me, to let me know the right track to follow.”

“Not I,” answered the Countess ; “and in good truth if I had the other night thought, when you first talked of love, that you but did so, because you thought it would please me, I would have been as cruel as a step-dame, to cure you of such vanity. If I knew the writer of the letter, too, methinks I would have him punished for a scandal.”

“Not so,” answered Rochester, labouring to

frame some graceful speech, at which he was not dexterous. "You, surely, would not punish him, for giving me the first hope of happiness, which I scarcely ventured to dream of."

"In truth, I would," replied the lady, "how dare he stand sponsor for my affections, and promise and vow so many things in my name? I declare there is not a word of truth in it, whatsoever you may think. I love you not at all, and never shall. 'Tis but your vanity that makes you believe so"

"Nay, I call all these trees to witness," cried Rochester, "of what you acknowledged half an hour ago."

"Oh, women will say what they do not mean," replied the Countess. "I hope no one but the trees did hear me; for I would not have too many witnesses to such a falsehood.—And so you showed the letter to Sir Thomas Overbury, and he it was, I suppose, who said I had written it."

"No," replied Rochester, "he divined that you were the person spoken of; but he said that it was a man's hand."

“ I wish it were burnt off ! ” cried the Countess in a tone of affected anger. “ I don’t like this Sir Thomas Overbury.”

“ And why not ? ” asked Carr, “ he says that you are by far the most beautiful woman in the Court, perhaps in the world.”

“ In that he is wise,” answered the Countess with a laugh ; “ but I hate him because you love him. I shall hate all that you love now.”

“ That is kind,” said Carr ; “ I thought the proverb ran, ‘ Love me, love my dog.’ ”

“ Ay,” said the Countess, still in the same jesting tone ; “ if you will treat him as a dog. But I can tell you, henceforth and for ever, I will have you love nobody but me, or I will have nought to do with your love. I will have you all mine ; you shall not give one grain of your affection to aught else on earth, whether the breath of life be warm in it, or it be but the cold production of art or nature ; I will not have thee stand and gaze at a picture of Rubens, or of Titian ; thou shalt not stand upon Richmond hill and sigh over the fair prospect before thee ; thou shalt not listen to a bird singing in a spray, and

praise its melody. Thine eyes, thine ears, thy heart, shall be all mine, or I will be jealous. There can be no partnership in love."

"You must not bring a bill into Parliament for all this," replied Carr, "or it will be called monopoly, and we shall have a petition and remonstrance."

"No," cried the Countess; "these are but my rights over mine own, these are the Royalties of my estate; every rich metal beneath the surface is mine, as well as the soil above; and no one shall trespass on my right."

In such conversation, they walked on, idle enough, it is true, and vicious enough considering the situation of the parties; but yet it seemed necessary to display, before the reader's eyes, this scene which may save us farther details into which we would fain not enter; and doubtless it has suggested, as we desired, a question to the mind, —almost a charge against our veracity. "Can this be the Countess of Essex?" the reader may well ask;—"the same harsh, repulsive, fiery, passionate being, who has been already exhibited in scenes with her father and her husband, which make the

pure and honest heart glow with indignation and contempt?—this soft, playful, jesting creature, the same bold impetuous being, whom we have seen casting from her the most sacred obligations?”

Yes, reader, it is the same, only under another aspect; the same spoiled child, all remorseless fire when contradicted, now sporting in her unwise hours of gratification with the same carelessness of right which distinguished her in her darker moments. Have you not seen a tiger in its cage, unmoved by hunger or by rage, gambolling like a kitten, smoothing its glossy fur, and stretching out, in graceful sport, its limbs both beautiful and strong? Who would suppose that it is the same fierce, devouring beast that rends the unhappy traveller in its fury, and gorges itself in blood and carnage?—Unrestrained passion is still the tiger, sportful when gratified, but terrible when thwarted.

They had turned back towards the palace from which they had wandered forth, Rochester thinking that during his long absence the King might have required his presence, and the Coun-

tess knowing well, that her ultimate objects could not be attained unless her lover cultivated assiduously the favour of the monarch. She could not refrain from saying, however, “Why do you not tell your dog,”—for so she henceforth called Overbury,—“to go and fawn in your place?”

Though there was something sarcastic in her tone, Rochester was not offended; for he was now completely the slave of her charms. Weak and unprincipled himself, the same personal beauty which at first raised him to distinction, was all that he thought valuable in others. The heart, the mind, virtue, even talent,—so often esteemed where goodness is neglected,—he cared little for, he thought little of, indeed; and in Frances Howard he certainly had found all that he sought for most in woman,—resplendent beauty, eager passions, and deep and vehement attachment to himself. That loveliness and that love had, for the first time, kindled within him the eager fire of which his own nature was susceptible. It seemed as if the insane passion with which she was possessed were in its nature infectious, and had seized upon him also. For her he was ready

to dare anything, to sacrifice any thing, however sacred or however good ; and it but wanted occasion to call forth all the power of the evil spirit, which had slumbered for want of object.

They had reached an alley leading back towards the palace, when suddenly they perceived the figure of a man advancing towards them, with his head bent down, and his arms folded upon his chest. He was tall, stately, and commanding in air, but seemed absorbed in a deep reverie ; and Rochester paused, looking forward and saying, “ Who can that be ? ”

“ Do you not know ? ” asked the Countess in a stern tone

“ No,” he replied, “ do you ? ”

“ Right well,” she answered, “ it is that very noble gentleman, the Earl of Essex,—”

Rochester’s left hand fell upon the hilt of his sword ; but the Countess proceeded,—“ Do you think that, at any distance I should not know that form, the hateful shadow of which has haunted me waking and sleeping for so long a time ? ”

“ Shall we avoid him ? ” said Rochester, who though as ready as any one to draw the sword,

was not, to do him but justice, inclined to wrangle in the presence of a woman.

“No,” answered the Countess calmly, “I have no wish to shun him.—Methinks I will take off my mask.”

“No, no,” cried Rochester, “not so,—give him the opportunity of not seeming to know thee if he will ;” and with a deliberate step they proceeded along the alley, up which the Earl of Essex advanced in the same thoughtful mood.

When he was within a few steps of them he raised his head. His brow contracted, but that was the only sign of emotion he displayed. With a firm, steady look he gazed at Rochester from head to foot, and then turned his eyes upon the Countess, fixing them upon her masked face sternly and sadly. It was evident that he knew her ; and indeed the beauty of her form, and the queenly grace of her step, were not to be mistaken.

Not the slightest quivering of her hand, nor any clinging to the arm of Rochester, indicated agitation or alarm on her part. She trod, as she passed the man whose happiness she had wrecked,

with a foot as bold and unwavering as if her path were one of virtue and honour. It seemed as if she wished him to see and know, how completely she had cast off all sense of right and decency ; and perhaps it was indeed so, for her object was to drive him to have their incomplete marriage annulled, and set her free to wed the man for whom she had disgraced herself.

“ I shall cut that man’s throat some day,” said Rochester after they had passed ; “ saw you the glance he gave me ? That cannot be long borne.”

“ I beseech you do nothing of the kind,” replied the Countess, the few better points in whose character require to be displayed as well as the darker ones, “ ’Tis not that I am afraid for you, Rochester ; but you must not spill his blood. I hate, abhor, loathe him ; but still I have brought upon him much misery, and I wish not to do more. Did he stand in my way, did he still persist in his claims upon me, I know not what I might not do to free myself from him.—Anything, anything, I believe. But such is not

the case ; thank God, he hates me as much as I hate him, and therefore I would injure him no further. Were he even to lash me with his tongue, instead of trying to look me down with his eyes, I could forgive him.—No, you must do nothing against him.—But now we are coming near the palace, and I must leave you. You can follow in a few minutes, I shall be with the queen all night.”

From these last words, the reader will learn that the Countess still strove to conceal her conduct from the eyes of the Court in general ; but in this, as might be expected, she was unsuccessful. Fond of scandal and of gossip, King James showed no reprobation of the gross immorality and vice that reigned in his Court, and seemed indeed to tolerate it, for the sake of the amusement which it afforded him, to hear of all the intrigues that were going on around him. But the encouragement he gave to every one of his confidential attendants to pry into, and report to him all the secrets of the ladies and gentlemen attached to the Queen and to himself, ensured

that nothing should be concealed which the cunning and acuteness of low minded and unscrupulous men could discover.

When Rochester entered the palace and passed through the antechamber, where some five or six gentlemen were sitting, he found them all laughing at something which one of their companions, who was kneeling on the window seat and gazing out, reported to them from time to time.

“ You seem gay, gentlemen,” he said, walking onward, unconscious perhaps, that he himself might have been the subject of their merriment.

“ Yes, my lord,” replied one of the jokers, “ we are just laughing at Bradshaw’s observations from the window. You would think he was the Alderman’s wife who has a corner house in the market place of a country town, so cleverly does he settle the affairs of every one he sees go in and out of the palace ”

The King’s favourite did not venture to ask any more questions ; but, replying, “ I give him

joy, both of his fine employment, and your pleasant comparison," he walked on, and passed through the opposite door.

In a small cabinet to the right of the chamber beyond, he found Sir Thomas Overbury, who looked not particularly well satisfied ; and Rochester felt an inclination to avoid any long discussion with him.

"Has the King asked for me?" he inquired.

"Oh, no," replied Overbury, "he has been well enough entertained during your absence."

"What with?" demanded Rochester.

"Gossip," answered Overbury, "gossip as usual."

"Well, then," rejoined Rochester. "I will go and knock at the old lady's door."

"No, no," cried the Knight, "Lord Northampton is with him now, having driven away Maxwell, who has been entertaining him with this affair between you and Lady Essex. I wish to Heaven, my lord—"

"Hush," cried Rochester, laughing and taking him by the collar, "not a word, or I will

strangle you. She is the most charming creature in the whole world ; beauty, wit, grace, everything—I can no more give her up, than I can fly.”

“ I do not ask you to give her up, my lord ;” replied Sir Thomas Overbury, whose morality was not very nice. “ I only wish you to be more careful. For a light love affair like this, you will never think of marring your whole fortunes, and if you do not mend the rashness of your passion, you will do so. Surely there was no need, boldly to walk out with her in the chase, when you have so many other opportunities of being together.”

“ Oh, she longed for a walk with me,” she said, replied Rochester, “ and how could I refuse her ?—Besides, nobody could see us. You knew where I was gone ; but we went out and came back separate, so that none of the rest of the Court could—”

“ Could do anything,” interrupted Overbury, “ but sit in the anteroom, and make epigrams upon you by the hour. The last thing I heard Bradshaw say, was foolish enough ; but it will show you the talk.

“ We soon shall see the Dane driven home,
And Saxon knights in Wessex.
Essex to Middlesex is come,
And Rochester joins Essex.”

“ His bad lines,” replied Rochester, angrily,
“ shall cost him his place, or his ears.”

“ Ah, that’s the way,” cried Overbury, “ that one rash act brings on another. You must needs parade yourself in public with this lady, and then you make an enemy of a man who has many powerful friends. But hark !—There goes Lord Northampton from the King’s closet. You had better go now, and laugh off this affair.”

“ I will, I will,” replied Rochester, and gladly left Sir Thomas Overbury, whose friendly counsels, to say the truth, were no longer so palatable to him as once they had been.

Those who direct us with skill towards the gratification of our passions or our wishes, are loved for their complaisance, and admired for their ability, by the weak and unprincipled, by the ordinary and the selfish, and, too often, by the wise and the great ; for that two-fold exertion of reason is extraordinary indeed which, when

misled by inclination, enables us to appreciate the wisdom which sees that we are wrong, and to be grateful for the love that would guide us back to right.

CHAPTER X.

It was a bright and beautiful day upon the whole ; though, from time to time, over the deep blue sky, and through the sun-shiny air, came some large pelting drops of rain, though nothing worthy of the name of a cloud was seen, and the shower lasted but for a minute, fleeting away with a rainbow on its wings, like some gay child tossing up a many coloured scarf into the wind. There was a bright party, too, upon the banks of the Thames, in Buckinghamshire, fit for the pencil of a Landseer. It consisted of a fine tall man of noble presence, about fifty years of age, mounted on a stout black horse, with a broad hat and feathers on his head, and dressed in dark green, with a pair of tan-coloured boots and red tops. Over his shoulder he wore a pouch of velvet, slung by a broad band of leather, embroidered

with gold, and reaching to the hilt of his short sword. His hands were covered with large gloves of buckskin, the flaps of which extended nearly to his elbow; and over the first finger of the left were thrown some silken strings and little globular bells. He had, too, a whistle of silver, suspended round his neck by a green cord with a tassel; and, as he sat there with his grey moustache, and flowing grey hair, his bright and merry brown eye, and easy seat upon his horse, one might judge him to be an experienced sportsman, well satisfied with the success of the day.

On his right hand was a lady—a few years younger than himself, perhaps, but not many—mounted upon a round, short-legged, but powerful galloway, not deficient in fire or breeding, but chosen apparently for its strength and courage. Its bright eye glanced, and its ear quivered, while, held in by the rein, it seemed eager to go on, and pawed the ground with its small delicate foot. The lady herself was dressed in a rich riding suit; and the hooded hawk which she held upon one hand, and

smoothed down from time to time with the other, sufficiently announced her occupation. The expression of her countenance was high and dignified; but, at the same time, there was a certain degree of quickness of temper, in the glance of her eye, somewhat softened by a pleasant and good humoured smile upon her lip.

On the other side of the gentleman we have mentioned appeared a younger lady, with her beautiful brown hair escaping in rich curls from a small black velvet cap ornamented with a single black feather, and her face glowing with exercise. She was mounted on a light grey jennet, full of blood and spirit, but apparently well-trained, and good-tempered, who, with head down and extended neck, snuffed at a low-legged spaniel dog, which, with open mouth and dropping tongue, lay looking in the face of its master.

Near this group of falconers was seen a strong middle-aged man, kneeling down beside a dead heron, which lay upon the grassy bank, and fastening on a hood upon the head of a hawk, which

he seemed to be caressing and scolding at the same time.

“ Ah, the haggard !” he cried “ ah, the haggard ! thou art not half reclaimed, art thou ? My lord, she will be a magnificent bird next spring. Did you see that point she made at the pitch ? and such a stoop !—There is not a bird in the mew, could do better. I told you, sir, with her first feather.—Come, lady, come, no rustling.—Where’s the other glove, boy ?” he continued, addressing a young man, who, with two others habited as falconers, stood near with long poles in their hands, “ There’s another bird not far off, my lord.”

“ Ay, but here comes a boat,” answered his master, “ and they will put him up.—I thought so ; there he goes ! there he goes !—Slip Margery, my love !—Whoop ! Sir long legs, whoop !—Off with her, off with her. Calm, good Margery, calm ! She has him, now she has him.” And off flew the falcon from the lady’s hand ; while the heron, apparently unwilling to tower, flapped its heavy wings along over the water, rippling it for some way with its feet.

“ After her, after her ! ” cried the gentleman ;
“ the brute will show us no sport ; as I live she
will let Margery strike her in the water. No,
no, there she goes up !—After her, after her ;”
and away he galloped, accompanied by the lady
on the galloway, and the three lads with their
poles.

The younger lady paused, however, and reined
in her jennet, notwithstanding all its struggles to
follow the rest. Her eyes were fixed upon the
boat which, rowed by two stout men with the
full current of the stream, now rapidly approached
the spot where she was. The next minute she
slipped from the saddle, her eyes bright, and
her whole face glowing ; and with the bridle over
her left arm approached the very brink of the
water, holding out her hand, which in another
instant was clasped in that of William Seymour.

He sprang at once on shore ; and, while Arabella strove to conceal from the eyes of the boatmen the joy that was in her heart, there was quite enough in her countenance to sweep away all jealousy for ever from the heart of her lover, if ever he entertained it.

“Is this accident or design?” asked Arabella in a low tone.—“It is very pleasant, Seymour, whatever it is. — But where have you been since?”

“Three days I was kept at Hampton Court,” answered Seymour, “then took my departure for Cambridge, cut across thence to Oxford, and then, knowing well that I should have a welcome from the Countess, came down the river with my two men in the boat.—Run her into the first creek you can find,” he continued, turning to the boatmen, “and come up to Lord Shrewsbury’s house at Malvoisie.—Where can these men find a creek, falconer, in which the boat will be in safety?”

“Not a quarter of a mile down, sir,” replied a man, who was settling the falcon which had previously struck a heron, upon a perch, formed of four rollers of wood, in the shape of a square—which hung from the neck of a boy, placed in the centre thereof, much like the pails of a London milkwoman:—“they will find a creek and a boat-house belonging to my lord too. There will be room enough for your boat beside the Earl’s barge. Then, if they follow the path, it will take them

to the house.—But I must run after the hawk, my lady; 't were a shame if she struck the quarry, and I not there.—There they go over Lawson's lea."

"Go, go, Harry," cried Arabella; "and tell my uncle I am following."

The man and the boy hurried away, and after pausing to speak a word or two more, Seymour replaced Arabella in her saddle; and then, with his hand resting on the croup, walked slowly on beside her, gazing up into her face, and drinking in sweet draughts of pure, and high, and holy affection. It was a beautiful contrast to the dark scene of strong but evil passion, which it has been lately our unpleasing task to paint.

"I am sure they will receive you kindly," said Arabella, after a short pause, in answer to something Seymour had said; "but I doubt, William, indeed I doubt, that either will approve of your staying long."

"Doubt not—doubt nothing, dearest Arabella," replied Seymour, "I saw the Countess in London before I went down to Hampton Court. She taxed me with my love; and I did not deny it;

and she owned that such constancy, on your part and on mine, deserved its reward. I have had a letter from her, too, since she heard of that scene before the Council, which she pronounces scandalous and wicked, and says it is high time you should be freed from the thralldom in which you are kept, and your heart suffered to have its liberty. 'Tis by her invitation, indeed, that I came."

"But my uncle," said Arabella, "I fear my uncle; I do not think he will countenance—"

She paused, and William Seymour asked, "What, my beloved?"

"What I believe you wish," replied Arabella with her cheek glowing, "our marriage in secret."

"My wishes go farther still, dear one," replied William Seymour; "I could not be content—not half content, to see my Arabella only by stealth, with long and frequent intervals. I must be able to pass the whole livelong day with her, to sun myself in her smiles whenever I will, to hear the music of her voice continually, to watch her eyes, and trace every varying thought from day to day."

“ Oh, that can never be here,” answered Arabella sadly.

“ No, not here,” replied William Seymour, “ but in another land, where this King’s power will not reach us. In any of the Spanish territories, in Flanders, in Italy, in Spain itself, we shall be quite secure ; and where thou art, is my country, Arabella. That climate will be brightest where thy looks beam upon me, that scene the fairest where thou art by my side.”

A bright drop rose in Arabella’s eye as he spoke, but she answered almost sadly, “ You know, William, that I desire nothing but you ; and yet it seems to me hardly right, that my love should banish you from the land of your birth. You have many friends, good men and noble, wise and honourable ; and I should be proud to see the husband that I love, surrounded and admired by those he himself esteems. I would enlarge all your sphere of enjoyment, Seymour, not diminish it. I would not have you for me, if I could help it, give up one friend, abandon one virtuous pleasure.—Oh no, love is not a selfish

passion. On the contrary it is a self-denying one ; for I feel, that all I could desire to make me happy, would be the happiness of him I love."

"Dear, noble girl," cried Seymour, bending down his head and kissing the hand that rested on her bridle rein, " I say so too ; and therefore is it, that I give not one thought to the abandonment of everything else, for the bright hope of making you happy in some distant country. But still, my beloved, you need not think that we shall be condemned to everlasting banishment. A few short years may pass, till the King sees that he cannot break our union ; and then he must perceive, that it is for his own interest, as well as his honour, that we should return and enjoy our rights in our own land."

" I do not know," answered Arabella, in a doubtful tone ; " he is hard and resolute in his resentments. Do you not know how he treated the Palatine who urged him, with continual prayers and entreaties, to set free the unfortunate Lord Grey ? All that the king replied was, ' When I come to your dominions, son-in-law, I will ask for none of your prisoners.' "

“Well then, we will set him at defiance,” replied Seymour; “we will fix our happiness in our mutual love; we will form our high fortunes in contentment; and leave him to rule, with his sceptre of parchment, those whose fate hangs upon his smile. I would rather be the husband of Arabella Stuart, in any land in all the world, where I may boldly hold her to my heart and call her mine, however poor be the pittance that I have to share with her, than live in riches in my native country, with the dread of an unjust monarch’s frown darkening each moment that I spent in her sweet company.—But there stands my Lord of Shrewsbury; his bird has brought the heron down I see, so he will be in good humour, and we must take the brightest moment we can find.”

Thus saying, he advanced with Arabella to a little knoll, on which the group of falconers had reassembled. The Earl had by this time dismounted from his horse, and was standing beside his wife, who was bending her head, as if talking to him rapidly but in an under tone; and the bright yellow sky behind them, showed clearly the fine

commanding features of the Countess of Shrewsbury, full of animation and eagerness. The Earl shrugged his shoulders with a laugh; and then, advancing cordially towards William Seymour, he held out his hand, saying,

“Welcome, welcome thou man of wanderings; you have missed a rare day’s sport by not coming three hours sooner, and well nigh spoiled our sport, too, by stirring this grey-coated gentleman from the reeds with your boat. However, as Margery has avenged herself, and brought him down from the skies with a fall—as should be the case with all ambitious spirits when they soar too high—we will forgive you. Come, we will back towards the house.”

“I did not see what you were about, till it was too late, my lord,” replied William Seymour, grasping his hand. “Dear lady, how goes it with you?” he continued, advancing to the Countess, and adding, in a low tone, as he bent down to kiss her glove, “thanks for your comfortable letter.”

“You shall have more to thank me for than that,” replied Lady Shrewsbury. “Well, my

pretty cousin," she continued, turning to Arabella with a smile; "we have struck our bird to-day, methinks."

"Not I," answered Arabella, innocently: "I had no hawk to fly, and therefore have got no quarry."

"Ay, but you have;" answered the Countess; "and the goodliest it seems. Come, Shrewsbury, deliver me of these jesses. I will have no more birds upon my hand to day."

"Take care, lady mine," replied the Earl, approaching, "that you do not get more upon your hands than you can manage."

The Countess took him by the moustachio, saying, "Wilt thou be silent?"

"See how she treats me!" cried the Earl, laughing: "and I have borne this for twenty long years. Let no man say, that there is not meekness amongst husbands!—Come, I will walk back.—Bring my horse, boy. You are too fat to walk, good wife; and this poor thing is too delicate; so we men will trudge a foot, while the women keep the saddle. 'Twas not so in the Queen's time, Seymour. With a woman on

the throne, men ruled ; now the coif and the petticoat govern all."

The Countess and Arabella rode on ; and Seymour and the Earl followed on foot, leaving the hawks to the care of the falconers. Lord Shrewsbury was gay and good-humoured, perfectly cordial in his manner towards his young friend, and repeated, more than once, that he was most happy to see him ; but he touched not at all upon the subject nearest to Seymour's thoughts, although the words he had let fall in speaking to the Countess, induced his companion to believe that he was not unaware of his love for Arabella.

The house of Malvoisie, which has long since disappeared from the face of the earth, had been built in the last year of the reign of Henry VIII., and consequently might be considered in those days a modern erection. But our somewhat weeping climate soon stamps the mark of age upon man's works ; and in the space of sixty years the red brick had become brown, and lichens had gathered here and there upon the walls. The immense quantity of beech trees, from which Buckinghamshire takes its name, and which there came close

up to the house on three sides, might have contributed to this effect ; but, however that might be, the house had already a very venerable appearance ; and the four terraces, one below the other, with their low walls and ornamented coping, gave it, likewise, a magnificent air although it was not of very great extent.

Servants were waiting at the door to give admission to the lord of the mansion and his guest ; and the Earl conducted his young friend at once into the Countess's drawing-room, which was furnished in a manner that any one may see described, if they choose to look into Lady Compton's letter to her husband after his recovery.

Lady Shrewsbury and Arabella, still in their riding dress, were standing talking together eagerly ; and Arabella's face was glowing, while her eyes were cast down, so that Seymour easily conceived, what had been the nature of their conversation.

“ Now then close the door, Shrewsbury,” said the Countess ; “ and let us hold a council together.”

“Nonsense,” replied the Earl; “suffer the poor youth to recover and refresh himself a little, before you attack him. Besides, I tell you fairly, I will have nothing to do with your plots and conspiracies, even if their object be but the robbery of a wren’s nest. You may do what you like, lady mine. I never was powerful in my life in marital rule; and my sway has waxed slenderer every year.”

“Because you knew very well,” answered the Countess, laughing; “that you had got somebody who could manage her own affairs and yours too, better than you could yourself; so like a wise man, as you are, you proved yourself a most obedient husband.”

“Well, well,” said the Earl, good-humouredly, “I will have nothing to do with your councils; but I do insist, that it is better to let this poor youth eat his supper, and not hear his fate fasting. So come along to your chamber, Seymour, and wash your hands. When once my good housewife gets hold of you, you may give yourself up, you will have no power over your own actions afterwards, that I can tell you.”

“After supper be it, then,” answered the Countess. “Come, Bella, we may as well put off these weeds, too,” and thus saying she led the way from the room.

The Earl accompanied his young guest to his chamber, where he found all the goods and chattels which his men had brought up from the boat; and Lord Shrewsbury, closing the door, took his young friend’s hand kindly, saying in a graver tone than he had hitherto used, “William, I wish you very well, believe me, and no man would do more to serve you or to see you happy. But let me advise you to think well what you are about. A man, it is true, may well risk much for the sweetest lady in all the land; but let not passion blind you, and induce you to take any step of great importance, without due consideration. Recollect that this dear girl’s fate is implicated, as well as your own. Having said this, my boy, I shall add no more; but, whatever you do, be sure that I will stand by you when it is done, as the son of my old dear friend, and the grandson of one of the

noblest gentlemen in Europe. Now farewell for the present."

William Seymour sat down and meditated. What the Earl of Shrewsbury had said, had the effect which words of good, plain, common sense, mingled with frank and feeling kindness, is almost sure to have, on the hearts of all but the vicious and the hardened. It made him think deeply, intensely, of that which he was about to do;—it did more, it made him even doubt his own motives, and his own judgment; it made him try, by every test that the powers of a strong mind could bring to bear upon the subject, the course he was about to pursue; and to ask himself, for Arabella's sake, whether his eyes were not blinded by passion; whether he was really seeking that which was most likely to conduce to her happiness; or whether he was risking her peace for his own gratification.

Eagerly did he debate the question with himself; and he strove resolutely to act as an impartial judge between desire and self-denial; but love is the most eloquent of advocates; and it is not to be wondered at, that, with so good a cause

as that which he had to plead, he overpowered all the arguments on the opposite side. To a mind not very sensible to fear, or alive to danger, the risks and inconveniences seemed small ; the probabilities of success great ; and happiness, if their escape could be effected, certain. He recollected all that Arabella herself had said : the frank confession of her love, the deep devotion which she showed towards him, her readiness to abandon everything for him. He asked himself, if his whole happiness for life was staked upon his union with her, could he doubt that hers was equally dependant upon it also. And then he went on to think, of what would be her fate, if neglecting the opportunity, if abandoning the chance of uniting themselves together for ever, she were left still in the same situation at the Court of England, in which she had lived for the last two or three years. The argument, which that question called forth, was conclusive. Could he, for any consideration, leave her to wither under the cold and icy tyranny of a monarch like James I.,—the sport of all his caprices, the victim of whatever a harsh policy, or a weak

complacence with the views of his vicious favorites, might require. He pictured her, day after day, suffering from unjust severity, or chilling neglect ; he thought of her, forced to mingle in scenes of vicious excess with those whom her pure heart contemned and abhorred ; he saw her urged, commanded, forced to give her hand to some base minion of an unprincipled King ; living a short life of misery and gloom ; and dying with blighted hope and disappointed love. — Could he suffer this ? — Ought he to suffer it ? — For her sake, as well as his own, if there were but a bare chance of delivering her, could he stand coldly by and abandon her to such a fate as this ?

Love, as may well be supposed, easily won the day, and proved to his conviction that the only hope of happiness for himself, and her he loved, was in speedy flight ; and, after a few moments given to the arrangement of his dress, he again sought Arabella and the Countess, determined to persevere.

He found them both with the Earl ; and, by common consent, nothing was said upon the subject, which occupied all thoughts, for about an

hour and a half, over which space of time we will pass, as the conversation of persons whose minds are filled with one engrossing theme, upon every day topics in which they feel no interest, would be as tedious to the reader as to themselves.

The supper was over ; the windows were closed ; the lights were lighted ; and the party had once more assembled in the Countess's drawing-room. The Earl, however, stood beside one of the tables, and taking up a light, he said, " I am going to the book room. When this plot is hatched, you can come and tell me, sweetheart ; and then you shall play me an air on the virginals, or sing me a song to the lute."

" Dear uncle," said Arabella, laying her hand upon his arm, and looking up in his face as if she wished him to stay. But Lord Shrewsbury merely bent down his head and kissed her cheek, saying, " God protect thee, in all circumstances, my dear girl !" and, without waiting for farther reply, quitted the room.

Arabella leaned her arm upon the table, and placed her hand over her eyes, while the

Countess demanded, as soon as the door was closed, "Well, Seymour, what are your plans? It is high time that all this should come to some conclusion; or you two, unable to restrain your love from appearing, and not having taken care to shelter it against storms, will get into misery, from which we shall not be able to rescue you."

"I think so too, dear lady," replied Seymour; "and I have come hither, certain of your kind support and assistance, to arrange what is to be done."

"You are both agreed, I suppose," said the Countess; "you love each other dearly, I know. —Is it not so, Bella?"

Arabella looked up with a smile, but made no answer, and the Countess proceeded.

"That will do," she said; "and I do not see why your affection should be barred by the swine King we have now upon the throne. Seymour, you have got some plan in your head, I am sure. Let us hear what it is."

"That this dear girl should fly with me," replied her lover, "that is the plain truth, Countess. I care not much to what country

we go, provided it be one that will keep us free, for a time, from the persecution of the King, so long as his anger lasts."

"I thought so," said Lady Shrewsbury; "and I suppose that must be the event. But I cannot consent, Seymour, to let her go without being first your wife."

"But how can that be accomplished, dear lady?" asked William Seymour. "You know, if we were to apply to any of the bishops, they would carry the tidings forthwith to the King; and if we have the banns published the fact will be soon all over the Court. We can be married the moment we are across the Channel."

"No no," answered the Countess, in her usual decided tone; "she goes with you as your wife, or not at all.—Do not suppose I think you would wrong her, Seymour; for I am sure you would lose your own life first: but if diamonds are valuable because they are rare, I am sure, so in these days is a good name; and she must not lose hers,—no, not for love itself. Nor is the matter difficult as I shall manage it. We have got a parson here who, though he looks upon us

all as what he calls Papists, is my very humble and good servant; and would be a Catholic too, if it was not for fear of losing his living, God wot. Thanks be to heaven, he mumbles like an old woman chewing a crust; and I never yet could discover the person who, when he publishes what he calls the *bands* of matrimony, could find out, who were the people he was going to tie in them. Thus, then, I will have it. You shall stay here three nights, and speed away again on the third morning. You shall show yourself at the Court, and in other places; and after the third Sunday you shall come down hither, where, in this quiet little church, perched up amongst the woods, without a house but the parson's for a mile round, you may take each other, for better for worse, without any one knowing aught about it. In the meantime, Seymour, you make all your preparations for departure. Have your ship ready, and your money prepared. My Lord of Hertford will not love you the less for marrying secretly a lady of the Blood Royal; and he is never unwilling to open his purse, for any generous pur-

pose. Shrewsbury and I will give you some help, such as it is, though the times are hard ones; and as, doubtless, the little that our poor Arabella has will be lost for love of you, it must be made up by your love for her. Let there be no writing in the meantime, till you come again; for we know well enough that there are spies abroad."

Seymour kissed the Countess's hand with many thanks, acknowledging that her plan was the wisest and the best. "But, dear lady," he added, "I almost fear that if this takes place in your house it may draw upon you and my good Lord of Shrewsbury, the indignation of the King."

"Good faith," answered the Countess; "his Majesty had better not meddle with me. 'Tis such poor timid things as this, that he can intimidate and overawe. But even if he should try, I have a hold upon him which will keep him silent—at least I think so. 'Tis not many months ago that he said to me, when the marriage proposed with the Duke of Gueldres was refused, that Arabella might choose one of his

own subjects if she liked ; he consented to it freely."

Arabella started up, and gazed upon her aunt with doubt and surprise. "Oh, why did you not tell me ?" she exclaimed.

"Because I did not think fit, poor bird," replied the Countess, "and something more. I assured the King that you had no thought of marriage then, that you were indisposed to give your hand to any but a man of princely birth. —I knew right well," she added abruptly, "that he was wishing to tie you to his minion, Carr, and I was resolved to shield you from such degradation. In wedding this youth here, you wed one of princely birth ; for in his veins is flowing the blood of our Seventh Harry ; and though you, sweet maid, may be nearest akin to this present King, I am not sure that he is not nearest to the throne of England. But so it is, Bella, the King did give this consent ; and I see not why, we may not use it now as well as then."

"Oh, this is indeed joyful !" exclaimed Ara-

bella ; “ he cannot, he dare not treat us ill after this.”

“ Trust him not, trust him not,” replied the Countess ; “ his word is as unstable as a quicksand ; and, if you think to rest upon it, you will be swallowed up alive. The course I have laid before you, is the only one you can pursue ; though this consent that he has given may perhaps shame him into moderation, and enable you to return sooner to your native land. Now I shall leave you together, pretty birds, in your cage, to talk over your plans ; and then you shall sing your uncle a song, if you have any voice left. While you are here, Seymour, we must keep you somewhat close. Our woods, and parks, and fields, may give you space enough ; but you must avoid the towns and villages, lest our secret be carried to the Court.”

CHAPTER XI.

ONE half the world does not know how the other half live, is an old English proverb, and a true one ; but there is something more to be said upon the subject than even that,—not one millionth part of the world know what the rest are doing. Happy were it for them if they did ; for how many a base and criminal design would be frustrated ; how many an anxious and careful thought would be avoided ; how many a wise and prudent scheme would find success ; how many a good man, struggling with poverty, would meet relief and honour ; how many a great man, crushed under the cold obstruction of circumstances, would be taken by the hand, and led up to the high places of the world, if the actions of all were open to the eyes of all !

The days passed sweetly with Arabella Stuart and William Seymour for the time during which the Countess of Shrewsbury permitted him to stay. They laid out their plans; they made their arrangements; they talked over the future; and imagination, that pleasant painter, represented the coming days in all the glittering colours of hope and light. Even when he had left Malvoisie, and was deprived of the society of her he loved, still the sweet recollection and the bright expectation gladdened the present, and cheered him while he made all the preparations which were necessary for the execution of his scheme. But, in the meantime, the views and designs of others, with little, if any reference to himself, were proceeding on a course calculated to frustrate all his hopes for a time, if not for ever; and while he, in total ignorance that such things were taking place, was rejoicing at the near approach of happiness, a hand was stretched out to snatch it from him, just as the cup was being raised to his lip. Oh! could he but have seen the events that were occurring at the Court of England; could he have heard the words that were

spoken, and divined the plans that were formed ; he might have found matter for anxiety and apprehension it is true , but love would certainly have found some stratagem to frustrate those purposes, which now marched calmly on to their accomplishment.

We have said that the designs and views of which we have spoken had little direct reference to Seymour, and to the schemes for his escape with Arabella. The eyes of the King and his courtiers had been completely blinded, by the precautions he had taken; his visit to Malvoisie had not been even whispered amongst the scandal-mongers of the Court ; and although the preparations which he had been making after his return to London were not altogether unnoticed, the tongue of calumny had assigned to them a very different motive from the real one, and most unintentionally favoured his purposes, by screening the truth under a falsehood. The suspicion, which had been so strongly entertained, of the attachment existing between Arabella and himself, had almost altogether died away ; and rumour had falsely attributed to him some tender connec-

tion in the native land of intrigue, Italy, which was supposed to be once more leading him away from the shores of his own country.

In the meantime, the King's favourite, Rochester, was pursuing, with all the vehemence of strong and overpowering passion, the guilty course which he had entered upon with the beautiful fiend who had got him in her toils. His criminal intimacy with Lady Essex was no longer whispered with a smile, or pointed at in an epigram. It was the open talk of the whole Court, the subject of grave and painful reprehension to the few good and wise who were admitted to the royal circle, and of laughter and merriment to the gay, the unthinking, and vicious multitude which thronged the palaces of James I.

To one of those, however, who could not be classed amongst the most strict in their notions of morality, his open and daring violation of even common decency, was a subject of bitter and anxious thought. Sir Thomas Overbury could not shut out the conviction, that this disgraceful connection might prove a serious obstacle in the way of his favourite project of allying his

patron to the Blood Royal of England, by a marriage with Arabella Stuart ; and every jest he heard upon the subject, came painfully to his ear. Sometimes he thanked heaven that Arabella was absent, and hoped that Rochester's passion would be as short-lived as it was fierce ; but, when he saw that, on the contrary, it became every day more and more ardent and outrageous, he asked himself if it might not be better to hurry on the marriage with Arabella without any farther delay, and, by engaging the King to exercise his full authority, to carry it through as rapidly as possible, in order to bind her for ever to Rochester, before she had such good cause to allege for refusing him her hand.

Doubts and perplexities, indeed, surrounded him ; for although Carr still talked to him on the subject of his marriage, and in order to blind his friend to the designs which he knew Overbury would oppose, affected to look upon his union with Arabella, whether he loved her or not, as a thing absolutely necessary to his security and advancement, yet he showed himself occasionally cold and captious, reserved and insincere, towards

one, who, for a long period, had possessed his fullest confidence, and guided him at will.

Many a deep and anxious fit of thought did all these considerations cause Sir Thomas Overbury ; and he resolved, after a long deliberation, to try whether by art he could not establish a new hold upon the favourite, more firm and tenacious than that of mere gratitude.

“ I must have some power over him,” he said ; “ I must have something in my hands to give, in order that I may demand that in return which might be otherwise denied, notwithstanding all the services I have rendered him.”

Such were his thoughts and feelings, at the period when the Court removed from Hampton ; and we shall now proceed to show the manner in which he endeavoured to effect his object, premising that for some months, he had been labouring to bring the King’s mind to the particular tone he wanted.

It was in the King’s closet at the palace of Greenwich. The monarch was dressed in hunting costume ; and, as the season was rapidly approaching when he could no longer venture to hunt the

hart, he was somewhat eager and impatient to set out upon his sport.

Something, however, had gone wrong in the stables ; his horse had not been brought to the door, at which he was to mount ; and he had sent one after another, first a page, then a gentleman of the Privy Chamber, and then Lord Rochester himself, to see what had become of the grooms and huntsmen, upon whose heads he bestowed a torrent of condemnation in very profane and unkindly language.

To ordinary observers it would have appeared that a more unpropitious moment could not have been selected for pressing a suit or asking a favour ; but Sir Thomas Overbury knew King James, as well as any one who was about him, and was aware that requests, which he would have denied flatly and resolutely when he had time for consideration, might often be wrung from him by importunity, in a moment of impatience and haste. The moment then that he saw Lord Rochester pass through the antechamber, he hurried to the king,—whom he knew to be now

alone,—with a small slip of paper in hand half covered with writing.

“ Well, sir, well, where are the horses ? ” cried James, as soon as he saw him. “ Those heathen fellows will let the fresh of the morning go by ; and the sun ’s peeping out as hot as a kitchen fire, to drink up all the dew off the grass.”

“ I think they mistook the hour your Majesty named,” replied Overbury, “ and instead of a quarter before, made ready for a quarter after nine.”

“ Body ’o sin ! did you ever hear the like of that ? ”—cried James, “ Did they never go out to track a stag in the early morning.—What have you got there ?—But if that ’s a supplication, man, you may as well spare your pains.—I ’ll have nothing to do with it.—Take it away.”

“ It is not a supplication, may it please your Majesty,” replied Overbury, “ but a paper which your Majesty was pleased to say you would sign.—You may remember the matter in which I moved you, sire, regarding my Lord Rochester and my Lady Arabella.”

“ I ’ll not sign it, sir, I ’ll not sign it,” cried the King, “ I told you so before.—She ’s got a hankering, sir, after that fellow Seymour, and I ’ll not sign it. If I was sure she would use it only to marry Carro, I don’t say but that I might. But I will not have the other !—Now look ye, young gentleman,” he added, falling, imperceptibly to himself, into a disquisitional tone, “ you are not without sense, and good parts, and judgment ; and, while we have a minute to spare, we will condescend to instruct you as to our motives, which with kings,—who are bound to exercise their sagacity upon fine points that altogether escape the attention of ordinary men,—are very different from the common motives of the people, or even of councillors, and men accustomed to broad and general state affairs.”

“ I hear your Majesty with reverence and gratitude,” replied Sir Thomas Overbury, in the fulsome style then used towards the monarch, “ and will lay to heart every word that falls from your lips, as the most precious guide to wisdom.”

“ Well, sir, that ’s right,” rejoined James.

“ Now listen then. Ordinary men will think,—and, most like, you amongst them,—that it is a strange thing that I should let this lady wed Rochester, and refuse her to the fellow Seymour. The vulgar people will think that it is because Rochester is, what they call, with their profane tongues, the King’s favourite.—I know their gabble right well.—Others will think that it is because I judge ill of this lad Seymour, or well of Rochester, as the case may be; and in this they will be reverent, though not altogether wise. You yourself may think that you have had a finger in the pie, and brought the matter about by smooth words and representations; but these opinions are altogether wrong. As my Lord Rochester is now a man of a great estate, the match may be a suitable one. As his fortunes depend upon us, we shall always have the staff in our own hands: and it is not unexpedient that she should be married to some one over whom we have the greatest authority, to prevent her from wedding another who might cause confusion. But these are all collateral or subsidiary considerations, and go no farther than to affect

her marriage with Lord Rochester. But there are reasons why we will not have her marry the fellow Seymour which are these: that he, failing his elder brother, who is but a puny lad, is the immediate representative of that Lady Catharine Grey, descended from King Henry VII. by Mary, Queen Dowager of France; and the lady, as you well know, being of the Blood Royal of England, and next to the throne, after ourself and our children, has been the object, as you well know, of many dark conspiracies and treacherous designings, both amongst the subjects of our crown and foreign princes. Now were the two lines blended more by her marriage with this Seymour there is no knowing what might come of it—wars, and rumours of wars, tumults, and confusion, sir. If they two were to lay their heads together, and take up either with the Papists or the Puritans, they might blow up a flame in a minute that would be difficult to put out again.”

“ I see your Majesty’s wisdom,” replied Overbury, with a low bow, and a well assorted face, “ and it shows clearly that her marriage with Lord Rochester, should be brought about

as soon as possible. If you will sign this permission, sir, for her to marry any of your Majesty's subjects, it will doubtless greatly facilitate the affair."

"Well, then, put in his name," said the King; "why should he not be the person expressed?"

"Because your Majesty is well aware," answered Overbury, "the lady has always shown herself coy and captious, never willing to give her hand where she supposed it was wished. At all events, sir, the paper could only be used according to your Majesty's directions;—and as to Mr. Seymour," he continued, "he is now paying not the slightest attention to the lady, since your Majesty so severely reprimanded him."

"It was due and merciful severity," answered the King, "like that of—"

But we cannot venture to go on with the blasphemous parallel which he drew between himself and the Almighty. He ended, however, by asking, "Where is the lad now?"

"He is at the house of his father, the Lord Beauchamp, in London," replied Overbury;

“ He spent a week at Cambridge, sire, then came back direct, and has been in town ever since, preparing, they say, for another journey to Italy, where, it is rumoured, he has some love amongst the Italian ladies.”

The King began to chuckle at what he called, “ the fule boy going a thousand miles for a woman ;” and he laid his commands strongly on Overbury to find out all about it, and give him information.

The Knight promised diligent compliance, and then added ; “ If your Majesty is gracious enough to sign this paper, it will give my Lord of Rochester the strongest possible claim to the lady’s gratitude and regard ; and it will not be necessary to present it to her, but merely to intimate that it exists ; so that all danger of a misuse of it will be avoided.”

“ Foul fall thee, man !” exclaimed the King, hesitating, and taking him by the ear ; “ what a pertinacious hound thou art !”

“ I know your Majesty is fond of a staunch dog,” answered Overbury, “ and you will never blame me for hunting upon the right track.”

“ Well, well,” cried the King, “ I’ll not sign it, man.—That ’s to say not just at present.”

“ Well then, sir,” replied Overbury, determined to make one more effort, “ I had better tell my Lord of Rochester at once, not to keep him any longer in suspense.—I hear his foot upon the stairs.”

“ No, no,” cried the King hesitating, “ let ’s see, let ’s see. Give me the paper.”

Overbury gave him the paper, repeating “ I had better let him know your Majesty’s resolution, at once.”

Rochester’s step was now distinctly heard coming along the corridor, and James looked round with a sort of nervous glance, exclaiming,

“ Where ’s the pen ? where ’s the pen ?”

“ There, your Majesty,” answered Overbury, putting one into his hand.

James wrote his name rapidly at the bottom of the paper, and gave it to Overbury, saying, “ There, there, let him have it. But do not stop him now ; and hark ye, you need not say that we refused to do it.”

“ I shall tell him, sire,” replied Overbury,

“ that nothing but your Majesty’s great regard for him, induced you to consent.”

“ Well, well, that will do,—but do not stop him now,” answered James, hastily ; and then exclaimed, as Rochester entered the closet, “ The horses, man ! the horses !”

“ Are at the door, your Majesty,” replied the favourite ; “ and the hounds and huntsmen gone to the north gate.”

“ Foul fall the loons,” cried James, “ I’ll make them mind my words another time. Come away, Bobby, come away ! We have lost much time already ;” and thus saying, he shuffled out of the closet, followed by Rochester ; while Overbury paused, gazing with a look of thoughtful satisfaction at the paper he held in his hand.

“ Ay,” now he cried, “ the way to fortune is open before him, and the road to power open before me. And yet,” he added, thoughtfully, “ Rochester has become somewhat cold, even when I am serving him the most zealously. Such is the usual course of the world.—I wonder how far he will push his ingratitude ?”

Thus is it ever with men blindfolded by their own selfishness. Overbury fancied that he was entitled to deep gratitude from Rochester, because he schemed and laboured to serve him; but he forgot to ask himself, whether all that he did, was not with a view to the gratification of his own ambition.

The man, who purely for the sake of another sacrifices his own peace, his own repose, his own purposes, may well be entitled to thankfulness. Nay, he who at no sacrifice does a kindly act, may have merit likewise; but the man who in labouring for another has his own interests, immediate or remote, still before his eyes, can claim but little gratitude from him whom he may benefit in reaching his own objects.

Had anything been wanting to show, what were the principles upon which Sir Thomas Overbury acted, his next thoughts would have displayed them: "I will guard against ingratitude," he said; "I will keep this paper in my own hands. His fortune will be then in my power, and hers too will be of my making.—It will be better to have her recalled to the Court at once. There

is no fear of this Seymour, now. He thinks not of her. As far as I can hear from Maxwell, he has neither been to see her since she went, nor even deigned to write.—No, no; 'twas but a common visit of courtesy; and these tale-bearers have magnified it into a matter of importance.—It is not there I have my fear; but I doubt that daring, impassioned, unprincipled Countess of Essex. I must break through that folly, or Rochester is lost; and yet it must be done skilfully, for it is no light thing to bring down upon one's head the anger of a fierce and ruthless woman. Still it must be done; and though Rochester be bound hand and foot in the chains of this Delilah, we will see whether ambition will not give him strength to break them. It was but an allegory that tale of Samson. Pleasure was the fair Philistine: ambition the strength giving hair of the Nazarite, which might be cut off for a time, but grew again in the lap of satiety; and though they blinded him, he slew them all.—He plucked ruin on his own head, it is true; and such may be the case with this man.—Well, we shall see!"

CHAPTER XII.

It was a fine clear morning in September, when, mounted on a powerful horse and quite alone, William Seymour began his journey towards Buckinghamshire. Seldom were more joyful feelings in the heart of any one; he was going to unite for ever his fate to her he loved best on earth; nothing had occurred to interrupt his proceedings; the eyes of policy seemed blinded; the very prying spirit of courtly scandal had not penetrated his secret. All his preparations were made. The ring upon the finger, and the benediction of the Church, was all that was wanted to render Arabella his own. On, on he sped then, with an eager spur, and with little apprehension of meeting any one who was likely to carry intelligence of his journey to the Court, which had now removed to Greenwich.

Taking the shortest way as it then lay, he crossed the Thames by the Horseferry,—which, at that time, existed about a mile beyond Sunbury, —recrossed it again some miles higher up, and then spurred on into Buckinghamshire through the deep Beech woods, whose green leaves were beginning to show the bronzing hand of time. He did not now approach the house of Lord Shrewsbury, from the side of the river, but passing by Burnham and Hedsor, took a circuit round towards the great gates of the park.

He was still about a mile distant, and the day had not yet reached the tenth hour, when he observed a man on horseback, apparently looking out for something in one of the neighbouring woods, about a quarter of a mile in advance. Taking it for one of the keepers watching the game, he rode on at the same quick pace; but the moment after, the person whom he had perceived, put his horse into a quick trot, and advanced towards him.

The figure was familiar to his eye, and in a minute after, as they approached nearer to each other, Seymour recognized Sir Harry West. An

undefined feeling of apprehension seized upon him; though he had expected to find the old Knight at Malvoisie; for it had been agreed that he should be invited to act as father to the bride, as the Earl of Shrewsbury declined to take any part in the business. But then, what brought him out at that early hour, if nothing had gone wrong? and the first question William Seymour asked as they met, was, "Is anything the matter?"

"Quick, quick," cried Sir Harry, laying his hand upon his young friend's bridle rein. "Come with me as fast as possible down this lane. There is not an instant to lose;" and, turning Seymour's horse, he led him like a prisoner to the mouth of a narrow green cart-road through the wood. Then freeing his bridle, he spurred on at a gallop, beckoning to the young gentleman to follow. Seymour did so in some consternation; and on they went as if they were hunting the deer, till, at the first turning to the right, where the woods concealed them from the high road, Sir Harry quitted the path he was following, and somewhat slackened his pace.

"Now, in Heaven's name, tell me what is

the matter !” exclaimed William Seymour, much alarmed.

“ Why, you have just escaped by five minutes, the discovery of the whole,” said Sir Harry West. “ Late last night, arrived at Malvoisie, Sir Thomas Overbury and Chaloner, with the King’s commands for the Lady Arabella to join the Court at Greenwich. Not knowing when you would arrive, or by what road, we have been most anxious as you may suppose ; and they, as if they had some suspicion, and were determined to detect you, have arranged, that as the lady chose to go by water in the Earl’s barge, Chaloner should accompany her ; while Overbury, who says his complexion is delicate, is to proceed with his men by the high road. The Countess has promised to detain him as long as possible, in order that he might not meet you at the gates ; and while your own two men have been sent, one upon the river, and the other by the lower road, to give you warning, I came out here to watch for you, expecting every moment to see Overbury at my heels.”

“How often disappointment meets us at the gates of expectation!” exclaimed Seymour.

“What is to be done now, Sir Harry?—Do you imagine they have discovered anything?”

“In truth, I cannot say,” answered Sir Harry West; “I hope and trust not, for no hint has been given, even of a suspicion. But, at all events, the Countess will let us know when we see her, for she is determined to gain some intelligence from Overbury; and you may trust to her shrewd wit for arriving at the truth.”

“But what is to be done now?” cried Seymour again, in a tone of despair. “What is to be done now?”

“The first thing to be done,” replied Sir Harry West, “is for you to come with me to the gamekeeper’s cottage, and there to lie concealed, till the Countess sends us word that these people are gone. As for the rest, William, this is but a silly business. Methinks the world is losing its wits; and that for this same idle passion of love, men are casting from them all those great considerations which are,

in fact, the first in life. Here is the Earl of Devonshire breaks down the noblest name that any man in his own day has created for himself, and all for what?—A Harlot!”

“Oh, name her not,” exclaimed Seymour, indignantly, “name her not, in the same breath with Arabella. If that woman be not worth—as she is not—the lightest thought of an honourable man, she, whom I love is surely, by her virtues as well as graces, an object for which any man might sacrifice the highest fortunes of the world without a sigh. What is it that we seek on earth, but happiness, Sir Harry? All other objects of ambition are but means to that great end; and it is but, in estimating well that in which happiness consists, that men show the difference of their natures. Where—I ask you, my good friend—where, could I find any object equal to that I should lose in her, if she be lost?—to that which I shall gain in her, if she be gained? What can one win by the unfruitful glory of the sword, but the malediction of thousands, if we make it the object of ambition? The only just cause is our country’s good; and noble love

has always strengthened, rather than depressed, the powers and energies of those who fight in an honest quarrel. What are the poor contentions of the cabinet, or the small and mean ambitions of a Court? The weights under which all good things are pressed out of the felon spirit. But such love as I feel for her, and she for me, will not only give happiness to both, but founded in high and honourable passion, will strengthen and support us, in every principle of right, and every worthy endeavour."

"'T is all very true, my young friend," replied Sir Harry West, "and I never for a moment thought of comparing this sweet lady with that bad woman, Rich. Nevertheless, with the impediments that have stared you in the face from the beginning, with the danger of bringing misery upon her as well as yourself, I cannot but say it would have been wiser far to have refrained, to have nipped the growing passion in the bud, and never to have let it take such firm root that it could not be plucked up. It is a silly business, Seymour, I repeat; and God send it prove not sad as well as silly.—However, as it has gone thus far, it must

needs now go on ; and I must help it, I suppose ; for it is never fear for myself that urges me, when I strive to dissuade a friend from a dangerous course, which may involve me with him. We can determine upon nothing yet, till we hear what news the Countess has obtained.—On my life, I know not well my way to this gamekeeper's house, but as we are out of sight of the road it does not so much matter."

They wandered near half a mile out of their way ; but at length, after considerable search, came to a keeper's dwelling in the wood, where the first question of Sir Harry West was, whether any message had been sent to him from the house.

"No, sir," replied the keeper's wife who was busily preparing her husband's dinner against his return. "There has been nobody from the house at all. Shall I send up the little boy to see?"

Sir Harry answered in the negative, and only begged leave to remain there for a while with his friend, as he expected a messenger speedily.

Casting himself down on a chest in the window, Seymour gave himself up to his melancholy thoughts, while Sir Harry West stood in the

door-way watching against accident or surprise. We need not picture to the reader the state of mind of the disappointed lover as he sat there, with memory brooding over his broken hopes, and imagination darkening the future. One half hour passed by after another, and no one appeared, till at length the keeper himself came in, and instantly recognised the old knight and his young companion, both of whom he had previously seen.

“Which way did you come, Harding?” demanded Sir Harry.

“I came across the horse road from the water, sir,” replied the man, “and should have been here before; but I just stopped for a minute, to give a clout on the head to one of those courtier fellows, who was teasing Lady Arabella’s gentlewoman.”

“Ha,” cried Sir Harry West, with a look of immediate interest, “what gentlewoman was that?”

“She, they call the Signora,” answered the man, “and a nice young lady she is, though she do speak English with a queer outlandish twang.”

“Where was this?” exclaimed the old knight, with his eyes sparkling with unwonted

fire, "By Heaven ! I will crop his ears for him, if he be one of the best of them."

"No need of that, sir," answered the man, "he's but a poor creature, and can't do any one much harm. I saw him run after the young lady from the lower terrace, and thought not much about it ; but taking across the covert, to see after the game as I went, I came upon him a quarter of a mile up there, teasing her sadly. So I told him to let her alone ; upon which he called me clown ; and I gave him a touch—just a little touch,—with the flat of my hand upon the side of his head, when down he went like a ninepin. He got up again, however, and went off towards the house ; so after that I said good day, ma'am, and came away—I hate those courtiers."

"So do I," replied the knight, "but this shows us, Seymour, that some of them are there still. So we must even share your potage with you, Harding, for neither Mr. Seymour nor I will go, while they are there."

"Right welcome, sir, right welcome," replied the keeper ; "this being Thursday, we always make plenty, to last till the end of the week."

As he spoke, a hand was laid upon the latch, and the next instant Ida Mara entered. As soon as she saw the old knight, who advanced to meet her, she put her hand in his with a look of deep and grateful affection, saying, "I have been stopped and troubled, sir, or I would have been here half an hour ago.—The Countess has sent me to tell you, that they are not gone. They stay over the noon meal. As soon as they are away, she will send to you."

As she spoke, she made a low inclination of the head to Seymour, but addressed herself to Sir Harry West.

"Who was this that troubled you?" asked the old knight; "the keeper has been telling me about him. Who was he, Ida? Old as I am, I am young enough to slit a coxcomb's ears."

"Mind him not, mind him not, dear Sir Harry," cried the girl laughing. "At the Court, I am obliged, very often, to give rude answers to such idle things as that. All I cared for was, that he followed me wherever I turned, and stopped me from coming hither."

“Then the Lady Arabella is not gone?” asked Seymour, somewhat impatient at this episode.

“Oh yes, sir,” replied Ida Mara, “she went near two hours ago, leaving me to follow with one of the maids and her apparel.”

Seymour cast down his eyes, and clasped one hand tight upon the other; and the girl, turning to the keeper, thanked him in as courteous terms and graceful language, as if she had been bred amongst the highest of the land. Then, looking to Sir Harry, she said, “I will go back now, sir, for fear they should track me here.”

“You must not go alone,” replied the old knight. “You may meet with insult by the way, my dear. I will go with you, till you are near the house.”

“Let me go, sir,” cried the keeper; “the jackanape will run fast enough if he sees me.”

“That he will,” replied Ida Mara; “but you struck him too hard. I thought you had killed him.”

“Pooh!” answered the man, “I only gave him

a touch. Those things ar'n't so easily killed,—they've got nine lives, like a cat. I'll be back again in a minute, good wife, so don't wait for me."

In about an hour and a half after Ida Mara's visit, a loud whoop was heard on the outside of the cottage, and Harding started up to open the door, crying "That's my lord." Come, Sir Harry, come," exclaimed the Earl of Shrewsbury, entering. "Come, Seymour, come, the land is clear of the enemy.—Bring their horses up, Harding.—How are you, William, how are you?" and he shook his young friend's hand cordially. "Nay, look not so sad," he continued, as they walked along; "all is not lost, that is delayed. With such a politician behind your hand, as my good wife, you have nothing to fear. Whatever Mary Cavendish makes up her mind to have done, depend upon it will be done. If she were to set her heart upon marrying me to the prettiest lady of all the Court, I should expect that she would carry me to the altar within a week, and get an act of parliament for bigamy. Its lucky enough that what she determines is

generally right, otherwise the world would soon be in confusion."

"But what has she discovered, my dear lord?" demanded Sir Harry West.

"Good faith, she must tell you all about it herself," replied the Earl. "I wish you could have been there to see how she twisted this politic boy, Overbury, round her finger; and without telling him anything but what was true, made him believe exactly what she liked. All I know is, that she is now his confidant, is aware of all his plans and purposes; and that he looks to her for help to carry them into execution, when, good life, if she does not thwart them all, I am not Shrewsbury.—Come, cheer thee up, William, cheer thee up, or my lady will call thee, the melancholy man; she has had no name for poor Arabella, since last night, but wheyface; and certainly the girl, what with fright at the thought of matrimony, and then fear of no matrimony, has lost half her roses. But as the Countess vows that you shall be married ere a fortnight pass, be you sure

it will be so, if all the kings between this and Bagdad were to say you nay."

"That is some consolation at least," replied Seymour, with the first smile that had lighted his countenance since his arrival: and in such conversation they proceeded till they came within sight of the house, when seeing the Countess walking upon the terrace, the young gentleman hurried his pace, and joined her before the other two came up.

"We have had a narrow escape, William," said Lady Shrewsbury, after the first salutation. "If these coxcombs had but waited a few hours, we should have had some unwelcome wedding guests."

"A most unfortunate event, indeed," replied Seymour, who could not master his disappointment. "Have you discovered how this accident befel?"

"Nay, call it not unfortunate, foolish fellow," replied the lady. "You young men, the moment they cannot have all their own way, look at nothing but the evil, though it be no bigger than a grain of seed, and forget to thank God

for the good, though there be a mountain of it. We have more need to rejoice at our luck, than cry out upon fortune, even if it were but that we have escaped detection. But there's a great deal more than that; and it is altogether the luckiest turn that matters could have taken. I wish to heaven you could have seen this upstart Overbury, this minion's minion, with his wit and his wisdom, and how he helped to take himself in, both last night and this morning. 'Twas a rare sight, I can assure you. Here's my lord will tell you, how I played the youth, as a skilful angler does a mighty trout; and how he floundered and spent his strength, till he was fain to let me land him on the bank, completely at my mercy. We spoke of all things, Arabella and you, and his own plans and purposes; and I explained to him in good set terms what I should expect for my niece, if ever she condescended to give her hand to Robert Carr. First, he must make her a duchess.—There he was ready to meet me; he was sure the King would consent to that. Did he not make Philip Herbert, knight, baron,

viscount, and earl, in one day? and what could he refuse to Carr? Then I declared, that I must have three thousand pounds per annum settled on the lady. This staggered him a little, the treasury being empty; but he ended by saying, that my Lord of Rochester's estates might well bear that; whereat I smiled upon him most graciously, fell into thought, and smiled again; after which he asked the meaning of my looks. I answered that he brought to my mind a bold ambassador who, once suing to a king for something on which his master had set his heart, made no scruple to promise everything required as an equivalent. First, it was the hand of his sovereign's daughter; then an enormous dowry; then a province of the kingdom; and, when the other party asked in jest an island in the Indian Ocean, belonging to heaven knows whom, he replied, it too should be given—if it could be procured. Thereat he laughed, and said that he could assure me all he promised he could perform."

"What answered you to that, lady?" asked Seymour.

“I said—now for the island in the Indian Ocean,” answered the Countess; “there is one thing more, good Sir Thomas Overbury, before I suffer my niece to be moved in this suit: I must see her freed entirely from the shackles with which the King has been pleased to fetter her. I must have in my hand the King’s consent to her marrying a subject; otherwise she may be trifled with, her expectations raised, her affections gained, and then a flat refusal come at length, and all her hopes be blighted.”

“But, dear lady,” exclaimed Seymour; “methinks you were but showing him the road, to travel to his object.”

“Hush, silly youth,” cried the Countess. “Do you recollect the story of that Grecian wench, who threw golden apples in the way of those with whom she ran a race? What did she want but time? and so did I. But the scheme answered better than my hopes. He replied, that I should have that too; to which I answered, in a mocking tone, ‘if it can be procured.’ He hesitated a little, thought deeply, and then said ‘Madam, it has been procured.’

This startled me ; but I rejoined, ‘ For my own justification, sir, before I take one step, I must have it in my hand. Lord Rochester must send it to me.’ Then came a longer fit of hesitation still, at the end of which, he answered ‘ Lord Rochester has not got it, madam ; but I have.’ I felt so angry that I was afraid of myself, knowing right well that a look, or a word, might betray me ; but I mastered it all, and ere he could see how frightened I was to find the matter had gone so far, I had got a look of sudden satisfaction on my face, which would have cheated the wicked One himself if he had been there. ‘ Indeed,’ I cried, ‘ well then you have the game in your own hand, whenever you like to play that card you may. But recollect, sir,’ I added in a lower tone, so that my good husband might not hear ; for he might have spoiled all—‘ but recollect, sir, if I do give my consent, and bring this thing about — I do not say I will, remember,—but if I do, I shall expect something for my Lord of Shrewsbury.” Could you have seen his face, William,—he thought he had the whole secret now, as clearly

as if I had laid my heart in his hand. He fancied Mary Cavendish one of his own greedy and exacting tribe, who would sell their soul's salvation for a rose noble ; and he answered that what I wished would be easily accomplished. ' The Earl's rank and station,' he said, ' would ensure him anything he thought fit to ask,' and he added, ' if my playing that card, lady, be all that is required to win the game, here is the ace of trumps ;' and thereupon, out of a silken book, kept snugly in his pouch, he took a paper, and held it forth between his finger and thumb. Good faith, if I had known what it was, I would have clutched it in an instant ; but I thought to see the name of Robert Carr staring me full in the face : and I cast about in my own mind what I should say to parry that, without deceiving him ; so I answered ' We have not settled yet what the Earl is to receive ; when you let me know what the King's bounty may be pleased to confer, it will be time for me to take the paper ;' and I put it away with the back of my hand, as Cæsar did the crown. My very un-

willingness deceived him more: had I longed for it, he would not have given it; but now he thrust it on me, 'Take it, madam, take it,' he said, 'and within a week you shall hear what can be done. I am sure your ladyship will be moderate in your views, recollecting what a claim the union of your niece with a gentleman standing so high in the King's favour, may establish for the future, even though you do not obtain all that you can desire at once.' I answered, proudly, that neither the House of Cavendish nor Talbot, had ever showed themselves greedy or exacting. But that, of course, we should consult our own dignity; and so I took the paper—thinking that by accident it might fall into the fire. I did not look at it till he was gone.—Luckily I did not, for I think I should have screamed with joy."

"What did you find?" cried Seymour, "what did you find?"

"His Majesty's full and despotic consent," exclaimed the Countess, "to our Arabella's marriage with any subject she may choose in the

realm. I clapped my hands till Shrewsbury thought me mad ; and I have it safe, good youth, I have it safe.”*

The first expression on Seymour’s countenance was joy, but the second was doubt and apprehension. “That is indeed something gained,” he said, “yet I cannot but fear that you have pledged yourself, dear Countess, to aid in bringing about Arabella’s marriage with this upstart minion of the King.”

“And so I will,” cried Lady Shrewsbury ; “so I will, if she do not first give her hand to some one else. I know all you would say, so hold your tongue, for ’tis but folly. Granted, that with the encouragement he has received, this deputy love-maker may hurry on the affair ; cannot I refuse whatever he offers ? Leave woman’s wit to frustrate man’s policy. Believe me, you are no match for us in that. ’Tis only force we fear. Come hither, my good lord,” she continued, raising her voice to the Earl, who

* It is proved incontrovertibly by Mr. Lodge, from papers amongst the Harleian manuscripts, that such a permission had been obtained from the King, and that upon it the Lady Arabella acted.

stood talking with Sir Harry West upon the terrace below, "come hither, and give us your counsel; and you, good knight, come too."

The Earl mounted the steps with a good-humoured, but determined look, replying as he came up, "I tell thee, housewife, I will have nought to do with it. Though you think you have gained a step, I see no great advantage; and all I say is, if the matter must go forward, the sooner it is done the better."

"It must go forward now, my lord, I believe," said Sir Harry West; "I could have wished it had never been begun; but, as the lady's heart is fully engaged, as Seymour is mad upon this theme, and as—if I understand you right—she must either marry him, or that pitiful creature Carr, there is no choice. On my life! I would rather wed her myself than she should give her hand to that poor minion."

"Out misanthrope!" exclaimed the Countess; "we will call him the woman-hater. He talks of wedding the sweetest lady in the land, as if it were giving himself over to purgatory."

"I should have said," replied Sir Harry; "it

were better for her to marry me than Carr ; for although, up to this present time, he has demeaned himself somewhat moderately, yet I see the seeds of strong, bad passions in him just shooting, and also that weakness of nature, which is, perhaps, more dangerous in a man placed at the height of power, than the worst qualities in one who has vigorous sense to guide or to restrain them. Miserable indeed will the woman be who links her fate with his."

"Arabella shall neither marry you nor him," replied the Countess laughing. "Here stands the worshipful bridegroom elect ; and the thing for us now to consider is, what is next to be done ? It is now two of the clock ; the good youth has ridden five-and-thirty miles ; he must have some rest, and some food ; but yet I would give a great deal, that he could show himself in Hertford to-night."

"That is easily done," replied William Seymour ; "my horse will carry me well. 'Tis not more than forty miles, I think.—But what is the object ?"

"Nay," answered the Countess, "you can

pause at Hatfield, then write me a short letter to my Lord of Salisbury, requesting permission to attend the Court. Send it off the instant you arrive: so will your visit here this day be concealed; and what I have said to Overbury will banish all fear."

"I rather fancy, fair dame," said the Earl, "your own plots and conspiracies make you think that the people suspect more than they do. When I was at the Court on Thursday last, the rumour of that business before the Council had blown by. Nobody thought of it any more; or if they did, 'twas but to laugh at it. Cecil said that the King seemed as jealous of the Lady Arabella as an Italian of his mistress, fancying people in love with her who never thought of her."

"Well, well," cried the Countess impatiently, "we cannot be too secure. The lad shall have some dinner, and then set off. You must mount one of his servants, Shrewsbury; and if he follow my directions, ere four days be over Arabella shall be his.—Come hither, come hither with me, William. You give orders about the horses, my

lord,—that is no part of the plot, you know ;” and leaning upon Seymour’s arm, she walked with him into the hall, where preparations for a meal were already made.

“ There, sit down and refresh yourself,” said Lady Shrewsbury, “ and listen to me while you eat and drink. You need not stay in the room, Jonah.”

The servant to whom she spoke withdrew, closing the door behind him, and the Countess then remained in thought for a moment, after which she exclaimed, “ All we shall want is a parson ; the banns have been duly published ; I will bring up a certificate to that effect, and meet you at Greenwich to-morrow, or the next day. You must find some good serviceable priest, who will not scruple to join your hand and Arabella’s in her own chamber or mine. Sir Harry West shall give her away ; and you must provide yourself with another witness whom you can trust ; for the dear girl’s fair name must not suffer.”

“ Oh, Rodney, Rodney is the man,” replied Seymour ; “ he is full of all excesses of love and honour ; and there is no chance of his betraying

our secret, if it be not in a sonnet addressed to my fair grandmother."

The Countess laughed, and her young friend proceeded. "He, too, I doubt not, can find me a clergyman, who will do all that is needful. Will you, dear lady, prepare Arabella? for it may so happen, that I have no opportunity of speaking to her alone."

"All that shall be done," answered the Countess; "and I too will take care to fix upon some day when the Court shall have business on its hands; so that our proceedings be unwatched. However, you must both get out of the country as fast as possible. Are you prepared with means?"

"All is done," answered Seymour. "Lord Hertford gave me a thousand pounds to pay our first expenses; the ship is in the mouth of the river, only waiting for us to sail. Now, lady, I am ready," he continued, rising.

"Nay, take another cup of wine," said the Countess; "have the priest, with a friend, prepared at Greenwich, and leave all the rest to me."

Seymour promised with right good will, to fail in nothing that depended on him; and then,

taking his leave of Lady Shrewsbury, he bade farewell to the Earl and Sir Harry West, mounted on his horse, and followed by one servant, rode away across the country. So far the scheme proved successful: he reached Hertford in time to despatch a note to Lord Salisbury that night; and no one in the Court suspected that he had been in Buckinghamshire for many a month. Even Arabella herself heard on the following morning that he had been seen during the preceding evening, at a great distance from the spot where she had fancied he must be, and concluded that he must have obtained intelligence of Overbury's visit to Malvoisie.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE was a grand pageant at the Court, on some one of those many occasions which, in that day, afforded the excuse for revelling and merriment, not of the most refined and intellectual kind. The morning had passed in tilting; there was a masque and dancing in the evening; and all the state rooms of the old palace at Greenwich had been thrown open, for the reception of guests invited from London and the neighbourhood, and for the multitude of noble persons, who usually thronged the royal residence.

There was music and dancing going on in the great hall; and beyond, through a vista of rooms and corridors, groupes were seen moving about, glittering in all the splendid costume of that day; while the faces of servants and attendants might be caught peeping in at door-

ways and open windows, or hurrying about, either carrying refreshments to those who needed them, or to prepare for a grand banquet in the farthest hall of the suite, with which the pleasures of the night were to close.

Arabella Stuart, who had been dancing, in order not to seem unlike the rest, now stood in the groupe near the Queen ; and to say the truth, although William Seymour was not present, she looked gayer and more cheerful than she had done for several days. Nor was the brightness of her aspect assumed, as had been too frequently the case in her short life ; but it had a cause in the conduct of others. It was not that any particular attention or kindness had been shown to her, but rather the reverse ; for she was well inclined to be as little noticed as possible. The truth is, however, that a scene was taking place before her eyes, which, however much it might offend the pure delicacy of her feelings, relieved her from a great apprehension.

Twice since she had been at the palace, Sir Thomas Overbury had found occasion to hint at Lord Rochester's suit ; and, although she had been

but once seen by that personage himself, she had dreaded, when she entered the hall, that she might be the object of painful attentions. He was now before her, however, and seemed scarcely to know that she was in the room. His whole thoughts, his whole feelings, his looks, his conversation were absorbed by the bright and beautiful Countess of Essex; and never, perhaps, on any occasion was such a wild and shameless display of illicit love offered to the eyes of a multitude, as was now afforded by those two unhappy people.

The King looked on and laughed; but the Queen, even light as she was, felt pained and indignant; and Sir Thomas Overbury from time to time grasped his sword belt with an involuntary movement, nearly tearing it from his side.

His irritation was not particularly allayed by some words of the Countess of Shrewsbury, who, in passing near him, paused for a moment, and said, "You see, Sir Thomas! What must the Lady Arabella think of this?"

She waited for no answer, but walked on; and the young Knight turned to one of the windows,

which were open to admit the air, for the night was hot and sultry.

Scarcely had the Countess quitted him, when a gentleman of two or three-and-thirty years of age, tall, graceful, and dressed in splendid but somewhat fantastic habiliments of sky-blue silk and gold, approached her, and asked if she would dance a measure.

“I am an old woman, Sir George,” replied Lady Shrewsbury, looking round to several persons who stood near, “and though your taste may run in that way, I cannot favour you. Give me your arm, however; I will walk down the hall with you to get some breath, for here I am stifled.”

They walked on beyond the dancers; and, as soon as they were somewhat clear of the numbers which thronged the hall, the Countess gave her companion an inquiring look.

“Now or never, beautiful lady,” said Sir George Rodney; “the priest and Seymour are in the little antechamber, between the Lady Arabella’s apartments and your own. Sir Harry

West and the dark-eyed Italian girl are watching them, lest, like two lions, they should devour each other."

"But it is before the time," replied Lady Shrewsbury, "and I determined that I would not tell her a word, till the last moment. I have not had an instant to do so."

"Nay, it is the time to a minute," answered Sir George Rodney; "they were long ere they began the dance. Seize the opportunity, lady, seize the opportunity. The happy moment always has swallows' wings. So catch it while you can."

"I will try and speak with her now," said the Countess, "and bring her away if possible; but we must have a little time. Come with me. I know you will be ready to play your part, whatever it may be;" and moving slowly back to the spot where Arabella stood, she placed herself next to her niece, while Sir George Rodney contrived to insinuate himself on the other side, between her and the Earl of Montgomery, who stood near.

"This gay gallant, Arabella," said the Countess

aloud, "wishes me to make myself ridiculous by dancing with him. Will you take compassion on him, fair niece?"

"It is too warm and close to be compassionate," replied Arabella, with a smile; "I will wait a little, Sir George, by your good leave."

At that moment, Lord Montgomery turned to answer some question of the Queen; and the Countess, approaching her lips close to Arabella's ear, whispered a few words in a hurried manner.

She had not calculated the degree of her niece's firmness well. A sudden paleness spread itself over Arabella's fair face; and after gasping a moment for breath, she sank down upon one of the low stools, while Lady Shrewsbury had just time to catch her drooping head upon her arm.

An immediate bustle took place around the spot; but Sir George Rodney exclaimed, "'Tis nothing but a swoon from the heat! She will be better in an instant, your Majesty. I will carry her into the antechamber for air;" and raising her, stool and all, he bore her through

a door behind the throne, while the Countess supported her head.

Several persons followed, but returned one by one, saying that the lady was somewhat better; and some of the light wits began to laugh and say, that it was more the warmth of Lord Rochester's manner to the Countess of Essex, than the warmth of the room, that had affected the Lady Arabella. In a minute or two Lady Shrewsbury reappeared, and in a low tone told the Queen that her niece had somewhat recovered, but, she feared, would not be able to rejoin the royal party.

"We will take her to her own room," she said, "and, by your Majesty's gracious permission, I will sit with her for half-an-hour."

She then rejoined Arabella, who was seated in the antechamber, with Sir George Rodney still beside her, together with a young lady belonging to the Court.

"She will do well, now, Lady Lucy," said the Countess; "pray go back to the Queen. Rodney and I will take care of her. Repeat

her some of your verses, Sir George, and make her laugh.—Nay, indeed, I will not have you stay, sweet girl,” she continued, taking her young friend by the hand, and leading her back to the door of the ball-room ; “ I will bring you a good account of her in half-an-hour.—Now Arabella,” she added in a low voice, when the door was closed, “ be firm, my dear, Remember for what a stake we all play.”

Arabella turned her eyes with a look of timid apprehension from the face of her aunt to that of Sir George Rodney.

“ He knows all, my sweet niece,” said the Countess ; “ he is to be one of the witnesses. Be resolute, my love, be resolute.”

“ I will, I will, dear aunt,” replied Arabella, faintly ; “ but I was not prepared.”

“ The less preparation the better,” answered the Countess. “ Give her your arm, Sir George. Take mine on this side, Arabel.—Can you go ?”

“ One moment, one moment !” said Arabella, putting her hand before her eyes, while her lips moved in silence for an instant, as if the heart uttered some prayer unheard.

“Now I am ready,” she added; and rising with their assistance, she suffered them to lead her slowly to her room. They entered by the door from the staircase; and she looked round anxiously, while the colour mounted into her cheek. Then seeing no one there but Ida Mara, who ran towards her and kissed her hand, she sank into a seat and bent down her fair head.

“Now lock that door,” said the Countess, pointing to the one by which they had just come in.

Ida Mara hastened to obey; and Lady Shrewsbury continued for a minute or two, to whisper words of comfort and support. She then made a sign to Ida Mara, who therefore opened the other door at the farther side of the chamber, and spoke for an instant to some persons behind. The moment after, there were steps heard in the room; but Arabella raised not her head, and remained with her cheek pale, and her eyes bent down upon the ground.

“Will you not speak to me, my beloved?” asked William Seymour, taking her hand.

“She has been ill, Seymour—she fainted,” said

the Countess of Shrewsbury. "I told her of the matter too abruptly."

"But have you any doubt or hesitation?" inquired William Seymour, still addressing Arabella; "if you have, speak, my beloved. I will never exact the fulfilment of a promise, from which you may wish yourself released. Have you any doubt or hesitation?"

"Oh, no, no, William," replied Arabella, with the colour mounting in her cheek; "none, none, whatsoever. Agitated I must be, apprehensive I cannot help being, but doubt or hesitation, I have none. With the same free heart wherewith I promised you my hand, I will give it now; and it is all I have to give. I wish it were a jewel, worth an Emperor's crown, for your sake."

"It is worth more to me," answered Seymour, "than the brightest crown that ever graced this earth. Come Arabella, all is ready, dear one."

"But tell me," asked Arabella, anxiously, "are we to fly to-night,—I fear I have scarcely strength."

"Oh, no," replied William Seymour, "'tis

but that the indissoluble bond may bind us to each other, Arabella. We must choose the moment for flight afterwards, when opportunity serves."

Arabella still paused in thought, but the Countess took her hand, saying: "Come, dear girl, come! You must recollect that if I and Sir George Rodney, are much longer away from the Court, it may be remarked."

The lady looked round; and seeing good Sir Harry West standing near, she held out her hand to him, saying, "Thank you, Sir Harry, this is very kind of you. You have indeed been a father to me often."

At that moment, some one tried the door which had been locked, and then knocked for admission; and, at a sign from the Countess, the whole party of gentlemen retired into the ante-room, between that chamber and her own apartments, while Ida Mara went slowly to the door, and asked who was there.

"It is I," answered the voice of one of Anne of Denmark's ladies.

"Open the door, girl, open the door," cried

the Countess aloud ; and the moment after, a young and pretty woman entered, and approaching Arabella, said, “ Her Majesty has sent me to ask how you fare, dear lady,”

“ Present my humble duty to her,” replied Arabella, whose frame trembled with agitation and alarm ; “ and pray tell her, I am somewhat better. My aunt will stay with me a little while, I hope ; but I fear I shall not be able to come down again, to-night.”

“ She does not expect you,” said the lady ; “ but I may tell her Majesty, you are really better, may I not ?”

“ Oh yes, much, much,” answered Arabella ; and with a kind nod and look, the girl hastened back to the gay scene, in which her young light heart found its pleasure, the door was once more locked, and the rest of the marriage party recalled to the room.

“ I will not keep you any longer,” said Arabella Stuart, rising, “ it might be dangerous to you, Seymour.—I am quite ready,” she added, raising her eyes to his face, while a warm blush covered her cheek. “ This marriage is legal, sir,

I suppose?" she continued, turning her eyes to the clergyman, who had come in with her lover and Sir Harry West.

"Quite, madam," he replied; "once celebrated, no power on earth can dissolve it, so long as the marriage vow be kept."

Arabella bowed her head; and the parties being arranged in order, the ceremony proceeded and concluded uninterrupted. Arabella answered firmly and confidently, and pledged herself for ever to William Seymour, with the fullest assurance of happiness, so far as it was in his power to bestow it.

"Now, Rodney, away," cried the Countess of Shrewsbury; "go round by the passages below, and in by the other door. Say, if any one asks, that you left the lady much better; and that I will be down in a few minutes. Away! away! Sir George!"

Sir George Rodney advanced a step, took Arabella's hand, and bending gracefully, pressed his lips upon it, and then retired by the Countess of Shrewsbury's apartments.

He was followed in a moment or two by the

clergyman, and Sir Harry West; and in about half an hour, Lady Shrewsbury reappeared in the hall of the palace, and mingled with the gay crowd below.

Many were the inquiries after the Lady Arabella, from those who could love and appreciate virtue and excellence, though they might tolerate vice and folly. But Lady Shrewsbury answered, with her usual self-possession, that her niece was better, indeed quite well, but that she feared to encounter the heat again; and the subject soon dropped and was forgotten.

CHAPTER XIV.

WE must once more introduce the reader into that school for idle speculation, the antechamber of a palace, where four young men were sitting, amusing themselves at the expense of their neighbours, and of each other. One of the principal personages was he whom we have denominated Bradshaw; another was an esquire, called Graham, of about twenty years of age; another a youth of the name of Blount, a distant relation of the celebrated Earl of Devonshire; and the fourth was the young Sir Charles Ramsay.

The day was wearing towards its close, and already the sky, which, during the whole afternoon, had been clear and bright, was becoming purple with the setting sun. The broad river flowing on, glowed like a ruby, in the light of evening; and the white sails of the boats, as

they flitted by, were tinged with the same rosy hue.

“Come, let us go out and have a sail upon the water,” said Ramsay, speaking to Blount; “here are Bradshaw and Graham, quite enough for all the King’s purposes, and I hate being stived up here for so many hours together.”

“Wait till Overbury comes out,” said Bradshaw; “and I will go with you. It is Graham’s turn to wait; and after six, the old gossip requires only one.”

Princes little know how ill-chosen attendants speak of them, almost within ear-shot. A king, who suffers the licentious in his antechamber, may be certain that their libertine tongues will make free with himself.

“How long Overbury stays!” said another; “if Rochester does not mind he will supplant him in James’s favour.”

“He does not seem particularly high in Carr’s favour just now,” rejoined Graham; “for he has been hunting him all the morning; and the noble lord favourite has avoided him vigorously and successfully.”

“I saw them dodging each other through the courts this morning,” said Blount, “like boys playing at hide and seek.”

“Ah, Rochester was dodging somebody else,” answered Bradshaw; “for there was Lady Essex, with a homely gown and servant’s farthingale on, a white satin mask, and a veil over her head, stole out by the west gate, and through the water-port of the park. There was a barge waiting; and Rochester drew off from Overbury like a sly old fox breaking cover quietly, and glided down under the wall to the stairs, then into the barge with my lady and away. She thought I did not know her; but one of Essex’s bright eyes is not to be mistaken, whether it shines through black velvet or white satin.”

“I’ll bet you an angel to a pint of Burgundy,” said Blount, “that Overbury wanted to scold Rochester for the business of last night; and, to say truth, it was somewhat gross, his going on so with Mistress Essex, before the Lady Arabella’s eyes.”

“I did not know that she was so far gone

as to faint for him," said Ramsay. "By Apollo, I think I have a better leg than he has?"

"The broken one was the best leg he ever had to stand upon," answered Bradshaw. "But are you of those who fancy that beautiful Bella fainted for him? I doubt it much, I doubt it much."

"Oh, the thing was very evident," cried Blount.

"It may be so," answered Bradshaw; "but, if ever I saw man, William Seymour was at the palace last night. He was wrapped up in a great cloak, with his hat flapped over his face, just coming up from the water-side when I walked down the arcade."

"You are in the luck of discovering people in disguise," said Ramsay; "the King had better send you to the mouth of the Thames to inspect all the vessels that pass, for this poor devil, Legate."

"Who is he? what of him?" asked Bradshaw.

"What! have you not seen the Proclamation?" cried Blount, "commanding all the

King's subjects, and especially his officers of customs and the ports, to examine strictly all outward-bound vessels, and ascertain that one Bartholomew Legate, accused of heresy, does not escape from the realm; and to bring him, and all other persons attempting unlawfully to fly the kingdom, before his Majesty, or his Court of the Star Chamber?"

"No," answered Bradshaw, "I have seen nothing about it. But I hope they wont catch him soon."

"Why?" demanded Graham; "are you a heretic, too?"

"No," replied Bradshaw; "but still I hope they will not catch him soon; for this is too warm weather, to enjoy a fire in Smithfield.—Then there is a sort of embargo established?"

"Not quite that," rejoined Blount; "a strict search, that is all. But here comes the favourite's favourite! I hear the King's door go. Let us treat him with all due respect."

The moment after, Sir Thomas Overbury passed through the antechamber, with a slow step and a gloomy brow. The four gentlemen

drew back, two on either side, and made him a low and formal bow as he went. Overbury, knowing that they were mocking him, merely inclined his head and walked on; but the instant he was gone, the four burst into a loud laugh, and began to comment upon his character without much mercy.

In the meanwhile the knight proceeded through the adjoining passage, little caring what they said or thought, occupied with far more unpleasant reflections. He descended a back staircase of the palace, took one or two turns up and down in the open air of the nearest court, and several times put his hand to his brow as if it ached.

“If Arabella,” he muttered to himself, “be but as infatuated with him as the King, the matter may still go forward; but it will need infatuation indeed to keep up his favour with either of them. The man has gone mad, that is clear. I have often heard of the power of a bad woman, but never knew it went to such an extent. Heaven and earth! what a world this is.—I will go sail upon the Thames, and see

whether the cool air will take the fire out of my brain; the sun is just down, and the moon will soon be up. I like the moonlight on the water; it puts me in mind of my father's house. —I often wish I were a boy again, and in my quiet home. Not all the glitter of courtly life, nor the joy of successful ambition, is worth one hour of holiday boyhood's pure, unalloyed happiness after all."

As he thus thought, he bent his steps towards the river, and at the little stairs below those of the palace, called a boat, which soon bore him down the stream towards Woolwich. He felt refreshed and calmed, and went sailing slowly on for near an hour. At the end of that time, he told the boatmen to turn; and the wind being now against them, and the tide in their favour, they pulled down the sail and took to their oars.

The moon had by this time risen, nearly at the full, and was pouring a flood of light over all things, tranquil and soft, like that which seems to shine from another sphere upon a spirit weaned from this earth's affections. The bo-

jects of the world around were all distinct and clear to the eye, though without the warmth and brightness of the day ; and as the boat approached the stairs, another shot past it, rowed by two stout watermen, with a gentleman sitting in the stern, wrapped in a large cloak, and having his hat flapped over his eyes. There was something in the figure, however, which caught the attention of Sir Thomas Overbury, and he bade his rowers ply their oars. The other gentleman reached the landing first and had just stepped on shore, when the knight's boat glided up ; and he himself, resolving to see who the stranger was, sprang up the steps, exclaiming, " My lord, my lord, I would fain speak with you."

" You are mistaken, sir," replied a voice, in what he thought an assumed tone ; and the other gentleman walked on at a rapid pace.

Sir Thomas was about to follow as quickly ; but one of the boatmen caught him by the sleeve, demanding his fare. The knight paid him immediately, and then walked forward as fast as possible upon the only road that led to the palace ; but some minutes were lost, and by this time

the stranger had disappeared, apparently through the great gates, into the outer court.

Overbury hurried on, and thought he caught a glimpse of the other's cloak turning the corner, towards that part of the building which, for some reason, was called the Ladies' lodging. In each floor of that mass of brick-work, were several suites of apartments, occupied by different ladies of the Court, and amongst others, the Lady Arabella Stuart. Below ran a low arcade, with a number of different doors, and staircases, and passages through the building, like those which are still to be seen at Hampton Court; and, as Overbury passed through the little archway leading from the outer court, he distinctly saw the figure of the stranger moving quickly along under the arcade.

It seemed to pause at the entrance of the staircase which led, first to a suite of apartments occupied by Lady Walsingham, and then to those of Arabella Stuart and the Countess of Shrewsbury, the latter of whom had accepted the royal invitation for a week, on the occasion of the festival of the preceding night. Overbury

thought that the person he pursued, entered that doorway, which, as was then customary, stood open. At all events, he did not see the figure proceed any farther; and exclaiming "Ha!" he advanced at once, entered the doorway, mounted the stairs, and knocked at the door of the Lady Arabella's chamber. It was opened almost immediately by Ida Mara, with a light.

"Can I speak for a few moments with the Lady Arabella?" said the knight.

"This is her bedchamber, sir," answered the pretty Italian, standing in the deep doorway, and only partially opening the door. "No one comes in by this door. You must go round by the passage to Lady Shrewsbury's. The Lady Arabella is with the Countess.—That way, sir;" and she pointed with her hand along a passage before him.

Without a moment's delay, Sir Thomas sped onward, and knocked at Lady Shrewsbury's door, making the same inquiry. He was instantly admitted, and somewhat to his surprise,—for a strong suspicion had taken possession of his mind,—he found Arabella calmly seated by the Countess,

at an embroidery frame. Lady Shrewsbury rose with a cold and haughty air, saying, "Sir Thomas, after several things that have passed, I can suffer no such conversation as that which has lately taken place between you and me, to be held in my niece's presence. Arabella, my love, you had better retire to your own apartments."

The lady rose, and bowing slightly to the knight, without speaking, quitted the room.

We must now return, however, to the door of her chamber at the top of the staircase. Scarcely had Sir Thomas Overbury been admitted to Lady Shrewsbury, when down the dark and winding steps leading to the chambers above, came the person whom the knight had pursued from the bank of the river. He knocked thrice, separately and distinctly at the door, which was instantly opened, and without a word he went in. In another moment, Arabella was in the arms of her husband. She held up her finger to him, however, saying, "Hush, love, hush! Speak low, Sir Thomas Overbury is with my aunt."

"Oh! he cannot hear, my beloved," replied

William Seymour ; “there is the anteroom between us and him. Did he come in this moment ? for some one seemed to chase me from the water side, so that I concealed myself upon the stairs above. He knocked at the door too, —did he not, Ida ?”

The Italian answered in the affirmative, and then withdrew to another room ; and, after a few of the tender words of love, Seymour went on to speak of their future prospects.

“I fear, dear one,” he said ; “that we must delay our projected flight. A proclamation was issued this morning, ordering strict search at all ports, for some less happy fugitives than ourselves ; and, I understand, it is already rigorously in force. But turn not pale, my Arabella, there is no danger. Our marriage can be concealed easily for some weeks, till these impediments have been removed.”

“I shall never feel at ease,” replied Arabella, “in these stolen interviews. Every time you are with me, Seymour, I shall expect to see you seized and dragged away—perhaps to a prison. At the first moment that it is possible,

let us go. I would rather do anything, bear anything, than live in constant apprehension."

"And I would bear much," answered Seymour, "to call my Arabella mine in open day, to be with her every hour, to be never separated from her. But still, my beloved, it is very, very seldom that fate allows man to know moments of unmixed happiness. Let us take that which fortune gives us, without clouding our little hour of sunshine with needless fears. If there be not one care, there is always another; and surely the sweet moments that I can pass with you are enough, for me at least, to compensate for all the rest of the dull day. The stars look the brightest, dear one, when the sky is darkest round them; and so may our nights of happiness be, all the more delightful for the heaviness of the time while we are parted."

With such words of tenderness and hope, William Seymour soothed her apprehensions; and as several more days passed without any new cause for fear, Arabella became accustomed to their secret meetings, and looked for the hour of Seymour's coming with all the joy of expectant

love ; while he forgot the little incident of his meeting with Overbury, and gave himself up to a feeling of security.

At length, one morning, when he was sitting alone in his father's house in London, Sir Harry West was ushered in, with an expression of satisfaction in his countenance which spoke him the bearer of good tidings.

“ You seem joyful, Sir Harry,” said Seymour ; “ and I am sure, by your bearing your gladness here, that it has some reference to me. What is it my good and noble friend ? ”

“ I must not rejoice,” replied Sir Harry West, “ at the capture of an unfortunate wretch whom the bigotry of an unfeeling monarch will certainly doom to the stake, I fear. But Legate is taken ; and this searching of the ships suspended. Now follow my advice, William ; lose not a moment ; but bear your fair lady to another land. Time, the discoverer of all things, will tear away the veil from your connexion, make it as thick as you will. Sooner or later it must be avowed ; put yourself beyond the reach of tyranny, and then proclaim it openly.”

“I will not lose a day,” replied Seymour; “it will take to-morrow to get everything into a state of preparation again, but surely the next day we can effect our escape.”

“In whatever I can assist you, I will most gladly,” said Sir Harry West. “I have got a purse at my lodgings, my dear young friend, which I need not, and you do; and if you will undertake to get everything ready in London, and prepare your fair lady, I will go down the river at once, and see that the ship be put in order, well furnished with men and an ostensible cargo, and ready to sail whenever you join her.”

All such matters were easily arranged; and when Seymour entered the boat that night to go down the Thames to Greenwich, it was with the bright hope of carrying Arabella, during the succeeding night, to a place of security, where all apprehensions of separation would be at an end. He reached the landing place, walked up to the palace, and knocked as usual at Arabella's chamber without anything causing him to suspect that he was watched.

Ida Mara came to give him admission as usual

with a light; but just at that moment somebody came down vehemently from above, and, as if by accident, ran against him dexterously—for it was done on purpose—knocking his hat off and exposing his face to the light.

The man was a famous sword-player, who had come down, from London to Greenwich, to amuse the Prince and the Court; and catching Seymour by both arms, as if to steady himself, and avoid falling headlong down the narrow staircase, he begged him a thousand pardons, assuring him that he knew not any one was there.

Seymour was upon his guard, however; and after saying, in a calm tone, that there was no need of apology, he turned, and with an air of indifference, told Ida Mara to inform the Lady Arabella that Sir Harry West would have the honour of waiting upon her the next day at noon.

The girl understood his object in an instant, and saying, "Very well, sir, I will tell her," shut the door. Seymour then followed the sword-player down the stairs and proceeded to call at the lodging of one of the young lords of the

Court with whom he was acquainted ; but after having ascertained the spy had quitted that part of the building, he returned to the apartment of his wife, and was instantly admitted.

In the meanwhile the sword-player hurried on ; and, passing through various passages and courts, directed his course straight to the lodgings of Sir Thomas Overbury, who was waiting impatiently for his arrival.

“Now,” cried the Knight ; “now, have you discovered him ?”

“I have dis—covered him,” replied the sword-player, who dabbled in the conceits of the day ; “for I knocked his hat off, while a pretty waiting gentlewoman from within held a light.”

“And who was it, who was it ?” demanded Overbury, with the rapid iteration of impatience.

“It was, and is,” answered the sword-player, “the second son of a noble Lord, the grandson of a noble Earl. His family is Hertford ; his name is William Seymour.”

“That is enough, that is enough,” cried Overbury ; “you can swear that it was he ?”

“As surely as I can swear that I am myself,”

said the sword-player. "But mark ye, most worshipful knight, my evidence will do you little good, for the gentleman did but deliver a simple message, and came away; after which he went to my Lord Ancram's."

"A trick, a trick," exclaimed Sir Thomas Overbury; "stay—tell me. Was it before or after you knocked his hat off, that he gave this message?"

"After, most worshipful," replied his informant.

"A trick, a trick," repeated Overbury. "He was wrapped in a great cloak, was he not?—with a broad slouched hat over his face?"

"To a point," answered the sword-player; "exactly as you had described him to me."

"He comes every night," said Sir Thomas, thoughtfully; "and has been appointed, I think, common courier between London and Greenwich.—I'll to the King at once."

"Excuse me, fair knight," rejoined the sword-player, as his companion was about to quit the room; "but you did promise me ten pieces of gold, commonly called nobles; and my necessities are triumphant."

"There, there they lie, above the chimney,"

answered the knight. "Now, Master Wingfield, void the room ; for I must to the king."

The man reached the money from the mantelpiece, and then, with a low bow passed the door, through which Sir Thomas followed him, locking it behind him. He was disappointed in his purpose, however, for James was busy in the composition of some recondite treatise, and refused to admit him, appointing him, however, to come on the following morning at nine o'clock. The knight shut himself up in his chamber for the rest of the evening ; but early the next day he busied himself in collecting farther information, and then hurried with it to the King.

James, with whom Lord Rochester's favourite and adviser stood very high at this time, condescended to inform him, why he had not received him on the preceding occasion, and even did him the honour of reading to him all that part of the treatise which he had composed the night before. Overbury bore it with the patience of a martyr, and praised and wondered so judiciously, that he rose considerably in the King's opinion.

“Now, sir, what is it you want?” asked James; “if it be not a petition, or remonstrance, an account, or a demand, we will hear you graciously.”

“It is neither of these things, sire,” replied Overbury; “it is only some information which, having accidentally obtained, I feel myself bound, as your Majesty’s most dutiful subject, to communicate to you without delay, although it may give your Majesty pain. But as you condescended to explain to me the wise and profound views which you entertain regarding the marriage of your fair cousin, I should hold it little short of treason to be silent;” and he proceeded to relate to James all the facts he had discovered regarding Seymour’s nightly visits to the Lady Arabella.

The King swore three or four most horrible oaths. “We’ll soon stop their love passages,” he cried, “the undutiful rebel, the traitor; after the solemn admonition that we gave him, he is no better than Fawkes or Digby. Nor is the lassie a whit less blameless. Call one of the secretaries, sir, call one of the secretaries! The

Privy Council must be summoned without loss of time."

"It meets at noon, sire, by your Majesty's own order," replied Overbury.

"Ay, truth, so it does," answered the King. "In the meantime have warrants drawn up for apprehending this rebel boy, and this headstrong lassie.—Lose not a minute, sir; for by chance they may flee. Away with you, away with you! Let the warrants be brought to ourself for signature."

Sir Thomas Overbury bowed humbly, and withdrew; and the King, rising from his seat, began to perambulate his closet, uttering many a strange oath and exclamation, and walking with that shuffling gait which he always assumed when suffering under any great agitation. To see him, one would have supposed that the news he had just received, referred, at least, to the loss of a province, or a rebellion in his kingdom, and not to the love of two persons, who sought nothing but domestic peace.

CHAPTER XV.

SIR THOMAS OVERBURY proceeded from the presence of the King, to give those orders which were to make two happy hearts cold, two noble and amiable beings wretched. Perhaps he felt some repugnance to the task, some slight touch of remorse at an act which he could not reconcile to his own conscience; for he had not been so seared and hardened in the fire of worldly pursuits, as to be callous to the reproach of the internal monitor.

Ambition, however, is a Moloch, which requires the sacrifice of the sweetest children of the heart; and he went on to seek Lord Rochester, thinking that he had swept a great obstacle from his path. How little did he know—how little does man ever learn to know, that there is an element always wanting in our calculations, one

that we seldom think of, and to which we never give weight enough — the will of God ! That which overrules the wise, conquers the mighty, frustrates the persevering, and leaves human schemes and purposes, but as bubbles glittering in the sunshine, to break when they have had their hour.

He found Lord Rochester sitting in a rich dressing gown of brocade, with slippers on his feet, and a small purple cap upon his head, partaking of a rich and luxurious breakfast at an hour which was then considered very late. Wine was before him ; for the reader must remember that those were days when the use of tea or coffee was unknown ; and the only difference between the refined man of pleasure and the robust man of labour, was, that the one seasoned his meal with wine or mead, the other with ale or beer.

Of the potent contents of the flagon, the King's favourite had partaken once or twice ; not so deeply, indeed, as to have any effect upon his understanding, but largely enough to give him a certain feeling of decision and determination, which

was in general wanting in his character. There were matters which he had long wished to communicate to Overbury; but in regard to which, he had felt that sort of timidity that a lad, lately emancipated from school, experiences in the presence of his old preceptor; and now, feeling himself in the mood to open his mind to his friend, he received him with greater willingness and cordiality than he had displayed towards him for some weeks.

“ Well, Sir Thomas,” he said, shaking his hand without rising, “ have you had breakfast? Come, sit down and take some.”

“ I broke my fast three hours ago,” replied Overbury; “ but I will sit down and talk to you, my good lord, while you go on with your meal, for I have much to say to you.”

“ And I to you, Tom,” rejoined the peer, “ I have hardly seen you for this last week, and secrets accumulate, you know. First for your business, however; for yours is always more important than mine;” and he helped himself to another cup of wine.

“ Mine is very important indeed,” said Overbury, “ I wish to speak to you about the Lady Araaella.”

“ And I to you, too,” interrupted Rochester ; “ that was the very subject in my thoughts ; and so perhaps I had better begin at once. As to that marriage, Tom, we must hear no more of it.”

Overbury started and his brow contracted. “ You are jesting, Rochester !” he exclaimed. “ Not hear any more of it ?—Why not ?”

“ Faith, I am not jesting in the least,” replied Lord Rochester ; “ and as for the why not, I will tell you in a few words. I am going to marry another woman ; and this confounded English law does not permit polygamy, you know.”

“ I have heard so,” replied Sir Thomas Overbury, mastering his indignation for the time ; “ but I am no great lawyer. We certainly see a great deal of polygamy at the Court. May I ask who is the fair object whom you intend to make Viscountess Rochester ?”

The tone of indifference which he assumed

delivered his friend from the fear of opposition, and he replied at once, " My fair Countess of Essex, good knight."

" What, another man's wife !" exclaimed Overbury ; " why that is polygamy the wrong way ! Nay, Rochester, now you are certainly jesting with me ; but I am not to be taken in."

" I am as serious as the dead," answered the favourite ; " and let me tell you, Overbury, she is not his wife, and very soon will be so no longer even in name. The marriage is about to be dissolved, and then her hand is mine. We have the consent and aid of Lord Northampton, the fullest approbation and assistance of Lady Suffolk, and her father's acquiescence. I will answer for the King's cordial co-operation. So that the matter is settled and secured."

" Rochester ! Rochester !" exclaimed Sir Thomas Overbury, giving way at length to the feelings of his heart ; " think, I beseech you ; think what you are about !"

" Oh, I have thought very well," replied the Viscount ; " so there is no use of saying a word about it, Tom."

“Nay, but you must hear me,” said his friend, “and I do entreat you, remember that I speak but from affection and devotion to yourself. I say again, think Rochester what you are doing. Remember, this woman’s conduct is the common scandal of the Court and the City. Recollect that she is but a—” and he used a word which I dare not write upon this page. “Her uncle and her mother are but panders to her vices; and infamous must he become who dares to wed that woman who has without excuse broken through every sacred tie, and made herself the impudent gazing-stock of Europe. I say, Rochester, think of the disgrace, think of the shame that will fall upon you, when men point to your wife, and tell her history. Remember how an act not half so gross stained and degraded one of the noblest men that lived within these seas,—I mean Charles Blount,—who raised himself by high and daring actions against the enemy in the field, to the Earldom of Devonshire: the conqueror of Tyrone, the pacificator of Ireland.—I say recollect the disgrace that fell upon him, in consequence of a marriage with the aunt of this very woman’s

husband, and do not forget that in his case there were excuses that do not exist in yours. That he was the lover of her youth, the man to whom her hand had been promised before she was compelled against her will to bestow it on another ; that she never from the first concealed her love towards him, or promised aught but cold obedience to the man who was forced upon her ; and yet, from the hour that he so disgraced himself as to wed Rich's divorced wife, he withered away, with shame, sorrow, and despair, and died in his prime, leaving a blighted name, which, but for that one act, would have lived for ever in renown. Oh, Rochester, consider all this ; consider the daily, hourly misery of knowing that your wife is looked on as a harlot, when you might, were you so minded, place yourself upon the topmost pinnacle of fortune, rise to the highest rank that the state admits under royalty, and found a family which might go on and bear your name with honour to posterity."

" I have considered all," answered Rochester, coldly ; " and I am quite determined. As to the marriage with the Lady Arabella, you are de-

ceiving yourself. I heard last night a whisper that she is already married to William Seymour."

"Nonsense!" cried Overbury; "Your open love for this dame of Essex, may have made her show some favour to another, but to pique you. But as to her marriage, that is some idle report of the poor fools of the antechamber.—She is not married.—She cannot be married."

"Pique me!" exclaimed Rochester with a laugh, "that were vain sport, Overbury. I am cased in proof. However, to marry another man would be carrying the joke somewhat far; and she is married, depend upon it. It is no Court gossip: I had it from those who have sharp eyes and sharper ears. She is married to William Seymour, as sure as my name is Rochester."

"Well, choose some one else, then," cried Sir Thomas; "choose any one but this woman—choose anything but disgrace."

"But I do not see the disgrace," exclaimed Rochester, who had heard him throughout with a heated cheek and contracted brow; "there is a great difference between Lady Rich and Lady Frances Howard, whom they call Lady Essex.

I tell you, though some ceremony was performed in their childhood, she is not his wife ; and the pretended marriage may be dissolved. Then, too, she has never loved any one but me ; she has never pretended to love this man ; she abhors, she detests him ; she has always told him so. For me she is ready to sacrifice everything—”

“ She has sacrificed too much already,” answered Overbury. But seeing by Rochester’s angry look that he had gone much farther than was politic, and that nothing he could say, would change his resolution, he added, after a moment’s pause, “ Well, Rochester, do me justice, and remember that I have but spoken for your good, as I believe it to be. I may be mistaken, probably am, but your happiness I wish sincerely.”

“ No man’s happiness can be secured, but in his own way,” replied Rochester.

“ True,” rejoined Overbury, “ but his fortunes may. To those this sad passion is the greatest bar ; and you have yourself owned that in seeking them, I have always counselled you

aright. It shall be my task still, to do the best I can to promote them; and if this be as I imagine, a false step which you are about to take, nothing shall be wanting on my part, to avert all evil consequences."

"I dare say not," replied Rochester drily; "and now to talk of some more pleasant subject. What does the King propose for the day's amusement?"

"A Privy Council," replied Overbury, forcing himself to speak in a tone of raillery, which was but too evidently assumed; "and after that to commit William Seymour to the Tower—perhaps he may burn a heretic in the afternoon by way of fireworks, and end by writing a disquisition for the Bishops upon the royal supremacy. You see the bill of fare is various."

"Yes," answered Rochester, "but none of the dishes much to my taste.—But, good faith, I must get on my new suit of amber silk, and visit his Majesty before the Council."

"Then I will leave you, my good lord," replied Overbury, "and still beg you to believe that anything I have said this day, has been

spoken in duty, not in opposition ; and so I take my leave."

From the apartments of Rochester, he hurried back to his own ; and then, having closed the door, he gave himself up to the feelings of anger and indignation which possessed him. He struck his hand upon his brow ; he walked vehemently up and down the room ; he cursed the folly of Rochester ; he upbraided himself for taking any part in the rise of such a man.

"And for this," he cried "for this I have destroyed the peace, and broken through the happiness of two good and noble people.—To be laughed at, to be made a fool of, to have my best schemes thwarted—all for a base, licentious woman ! And this sweet lady on whom I have brought misery—Can she be really married to William Seymour ? It is not improbable—the very conduct of this man may have driven her on to give her hand clandestinely to another ;—and I have gone and destroyed them ! Would to God I had not been so hasty !" and he sat down and meditated over the act with regret.

But the past, the irremediable past, the only

one thing certain to man's limited view, was set as a seal upon the deed which nothing could tear off; and yet he—as many other men would have done in his circumstances—turned his thoughts to the retrieval of that which could not be retrieved.

“What can be done?” he thought. “It may not yet be too late. If they are prepared to fly, as the King suspected, and as is probably the case, they may have time yet, if they have warning.—I can delay the warrants. Then the Council will have to assemble; there will be a long and tiresome harangue of an hour—discussions perhaps. The water is near, the wind fair. She shall have warning at least;” and sitting down, he wrote in a feigned hand, the following few words to Arabella Seymour.

“Lady, a friend gives you intimation that danger hangs over your head. If you have the means to fly, and have aught that fears discovery in this Court, go at once.—You may count upon one hour, but not more.”

He folded, sealed it, and hurried through the Court towards the apartments of the lady.

Within a few steps of the door, he met one of her inferior maids, not Ida Mara, apparently coming from her mistress's room ; and recognizing her at once, he said, " Take this back to your lady directly, my good girl. I had it from a gentleman this moment, who said that it was of urgent importance."

The girl took the billet, and saying that she would carry it to Arabella at once, returned towards her mistress's chamber, while Overbury bent his steps to the council room, where he had left a young clerk making out the warrants.

" Well, are they done ?" said the Knight.

" One is ready, sir," replied the clerk, " and the other wants but a few words."

Overbury took up the paper which was completed, and read it slowly through.

" Good Heaven !" he exclaimed, " this will never do. Why, it is a warrant against the Lady Arabella, as if she were a common felon.—Recollect, sir, that she is the King's cousin. It ought to have been a simple summons to appear before the Council."

“ You said two warrants, Sir Thomas,” replied the clerk.

“ Well, at all events,” exclaimed the Knight, sharply, “ this will not do ;” and he tore the paper, throwing the fragments under the table. “ There, leave that, leave that ! and make out a summons. The Lady Arabella’s case is the most important. Remember, you give her her proper style, sir.”

“ I am sure I do not know what that is,” answered the clerk.

“ If you look in that book, sir, you will find it,” rejoined the Knight, “ it is not very difficult to discover. You can finish the warrant against Mr. Seymour afterwards ; I will return for the summons in half an hour,” and away he went to inform the King, that there had been a mistake in drawing out the papers, but that they would be ready shortly.

He found James I. still in a high state of perturbation, which was increased by the tidings that the warrants were not yet ready.

“ The de’ils in the clerks !” he exclaimed ; “ the lazy loons are getting daily more slow,

though not more circumspect. Why, the lassie may take wing and be away afore the warrants are ready. Go your ways and hasten him, Sir Thomas. You can write a good hand yourself, and need not mind holding a pen at the King's command."

"I shall do so, as in duty bound, sire," replied Overbury, "and I can make out that against Mr. Seymour, while the clerk finishes the one against the Lady Arabella;" and he accordingly retired, mentally resolving that the assistance, which he was about to lend, should not greatly accelerate the drawing up of the papers.

When he was gone, the King continued for a minute or two, to move about in his cabinet, with the sort of irritable activity which has acquired the name of fidgetting.—Changing the place of this article and that, pulling the points of his hose, buttoning and unbuttoning his pourpoint, sitting down, and then rising up, and displaying many signs and symptoms of that state of ennui, in which impatience is blended with listlessness.

At the end of that time, however, there was a gentle tap at the door of the cabinet, and exclaiming pettishly, "Come in, come in!" the King fixed his eyes upon the entrance, at which immediately appeared the stout, raw-boned person, and broad, but somewhat coarse face, of one of his Scotch attendants.

"Ah, Maxwell!" cried James, "why, where ha'e you been, man? I thought all the world had forgotten their loyalty, and left their King, without respect and decency. Here was Rochester came in and whiffled me a jest, and out again, to put on a ruby he had forgotten. So he said; but methinks it was to other purpose that he went; and no one has been here but Sir Thomas Overbury, who seems to be the only man that thinks his King's service worth attending to."

The querulous tone in which James spoke, indicated a mood ready to receive evil impressions of any one; and, as Maxwell was not particularly well-inclined, any more than other courtiers, to make favourable reports of his rivals in the

King's power, he seized the opportunity to damage the reputation of one, who was rising too high over the heads of the minor aspirants, to escape jealousy.

“ Oh, your Majesty has not a more faithful servant, I am sure, than Sir Thomas Overbury,” he said ; “ he is only a little dull in believing that others will rebel against your will, or thwart your sagacious views. Your Majesty recollects the business about Mr. Seymour, and the Lady Arabella.”

“ Hout tout ! Maxwell,” cried the King, interrupting him before he could go further ; “ you're a jealous beast. But you've missed your fire, my man. Your match has burnt out, and will not light the powder. Why, Overbury has, this very morning, laid open to me all their doings ; and is now drawing up the warrants for their arrest.”

“ The warrants will take a long time drawing then, your Majesty,” replied Maxwell. “ If I were a king, or you, sire, a poor Scotch gentleman like myself, I'd bet you a stoup of wine that there will be one mistake or another about

drawing up the warrants, till a full hour be lost ; and then the messengers may whistle for the lady, or her lover."

"Ha, what's that? what's that?" cried the King. "Why, there has been one mistake already.—You're either a warlock, Maxwell, or you know more about the affair than you tell. Speak plain, man! speak plain! What have you seen?—what have you heard?"

"Why, if your Majesty really wishes to know," replied Maxwell, "and will condescend to promise not to tell my Lord of Rochester, I will relate all that has just happened; and you will soon see how faithful a servant is this Sir Thomas Overbury; who must needs contradict what I told you, sire, of Mr. Seymour and the Lady Arabella meeting in the grounds at Theobalds."

"Speak, man, speak!" cried the King, "I'll keep counsel as close as a wilk. You have our commands, sir; so you will be harmless."

"Well, then, sire, just now as I was walking along the cloister—" answered Maxwell.

“Call it the arcade,” said the King; “cloister is a popish word.”

“Well, sire, as I was walking along the arcade,” continued Maxwell, “I saw a maid belonging to the Lady Arabella, carrying a note in her hand. Now, I had just passed good Sir Thomas Overbury; and a fancy struck me, I do not know why, that all was not right;—for all the Court, you know, say he is playing double with your Majesty. So I asked the girl to let me see the note; and, after much ado, I got her to consent. Well, there, sire, I saw Sir Thomas’s own writing, somewhat twisted and turned to disguise it, but clear enough for all that; and, in the inside, was written a warning to the lady, to fly from the Court with all speed. He engaged she should have an hour clear; and therefore it was, I said there would be mistakes enough, and delays enough, before the warrants are ready.”

“The false loon!” cried the King, “the whelp of a traitor!—But we’ll circumvent him. Run, Maxwell, run! Put a guard at the foot

of each staircase that leads from her rooms and the Lady Shrewsbury's.—Fegs ! they might have put out the “*bury*,” and left the “*Shrew*.”—Tell the guard to let no one pass out.—Run, man ! run !—Speak not, but away !”

Maxwell obeyed the King's command, and hurried out of the cabinet ; and James, casting himself into a chair, gave way to a fit of laughter, in the first place, at the thought of having circumvented Overbury. He soon returned, however, to the thought of the knight's offences ; and he rolled himself about, with much of that awkward air of indignation, which the accounts of African travellers, ascribe to the angry hippopotamus.

“The deceitful pagan !” he cried, “the treacherous dog ! I'll punish him for forgetting his duty to God's anointed — But softly, softly ! He has too many secrets. We will deal gently with him.—Those cunning Romans, when they were about to punish a great malefactor, took him up to a high place, before they hurled him headlong down, that he might break his neck

by the fall ; which is a wise and good example to modern Kings, who may make such men's ambition, the Tarpeian rock, from the highest point of which, they may get a fall when they least look for it."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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ARABELLA
STUART.

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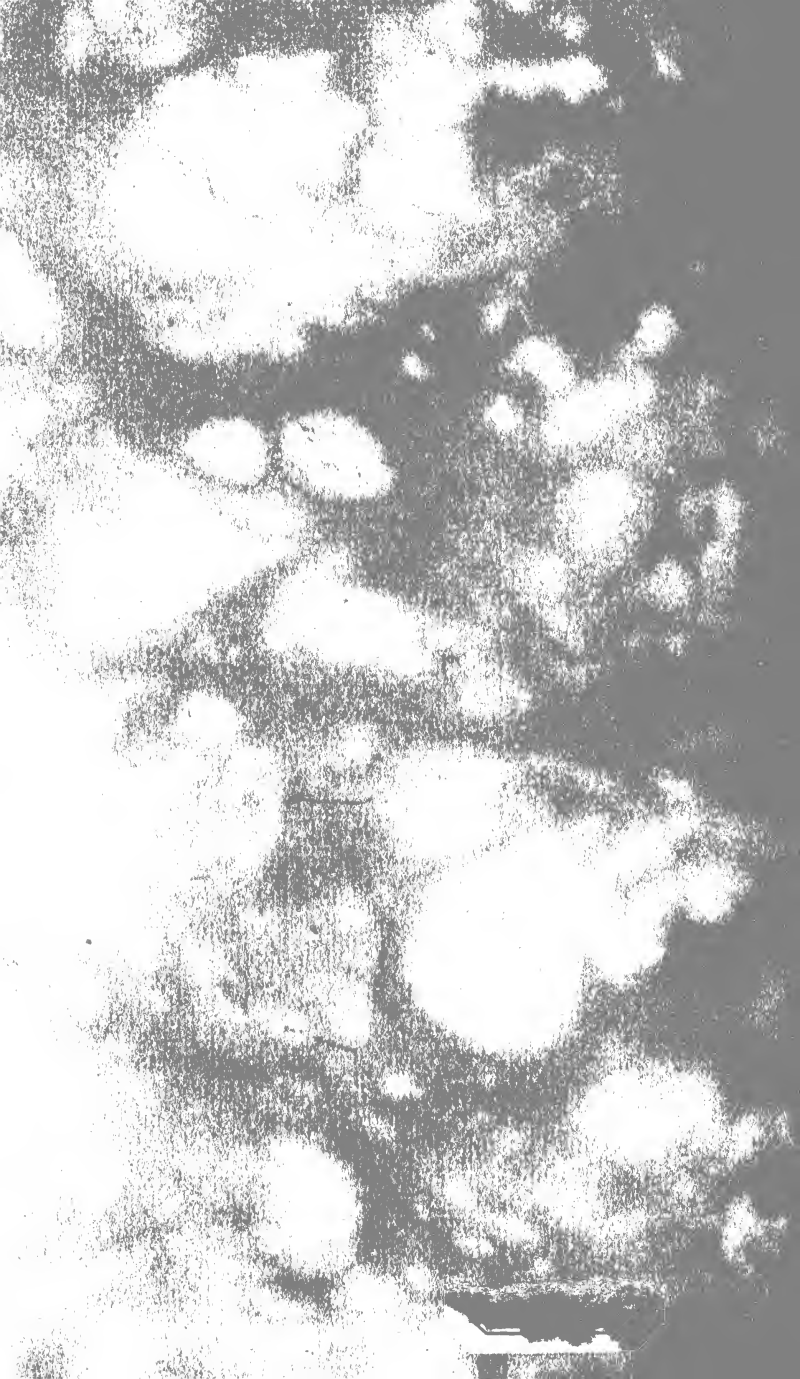
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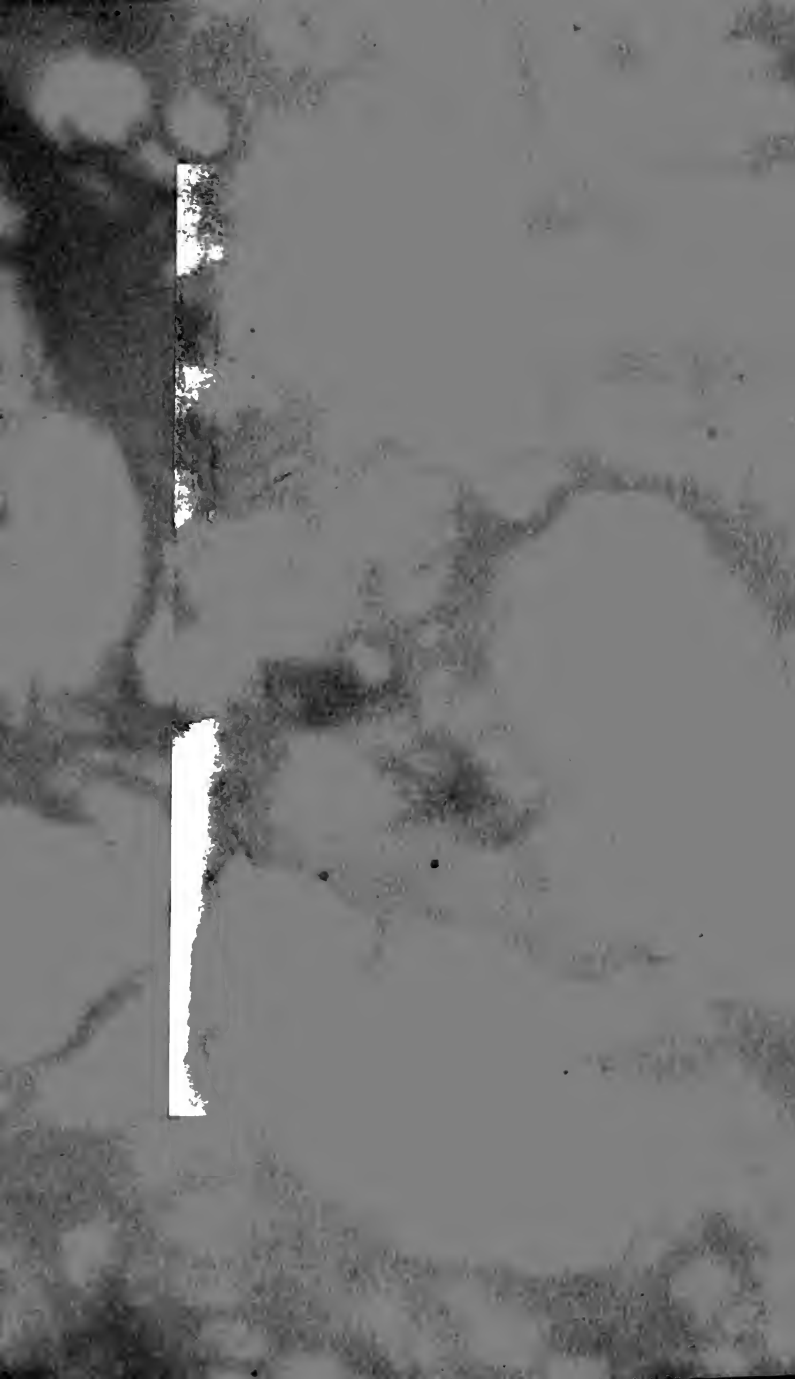
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